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James, John Angell, 1785-1859.
The works of John Angell James

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

VOL. VI.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY.
THE COURSE OF FAITH.

LONDON: HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM: HUDSON & SON.
MDCCCLX.

THE CHRISTIAN GRACES
FAITH HOPE AND LOVE

BY

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
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VOL. I.

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CHRISTIAN CHARITY EXPLAINED

OR THE

INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON TEMPER

STATED IN AN

EXPOSITION OF THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

"Truth and love are two of the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of Truth, and the silken cords of Love, twisted together, will draw men with sweet violence, whether they will or no." CUDWORTH.

PREFACE.

A WORK which the Author published a few years since, on the Duties of Church Members, concludes with the following sentence: "Let us remember that humility and love are the necessary fruits of our doctrines, the highest beauty of our character, and the guardian angels of our churches." To prove and elucidate this sentiment, and to state at greater length than it was possible for him to do in that treatise, the nature, operations, and importance, of charity, he was induced to enter upon a series of sermons on the chapter which is the subject of this volume. These Discourses, although, of course, very practical, were heard with much attention and apparent interest. Before they were finished, many requests were presented for their publication; a promise was given to that effect, and the intention announced to the public. On a further inspection of his notes, the Author saw so little that was either novel, or on any account worthy to meet the public eye, that he had for two years quite abandoned his intention of printing. Circumstances which need

not be mentioned, together with frequent inquiries from his friends after the forthcoming treatise, drew his attention again to the subject a few months since, and revived the original purpose of sending from the press the substance of these plain and practical Discourses. That intention is now executed; with what results the sovereign grace of Jehovah, to whom it is humbly commended, must determine.

The Author can easily suppose, that among many other faults which the scrutinising eye of criticism will discover in his work, and which its stern voice will condemn, one is the tautologies, of which, in some places, it appears to be guilty. In answer to this, he can only remark, that in the discussion of such a subject, where the parts are divided by almost imperceptible lines, and run so much into each other, he found it very difficult to avoid this repetition, which after all, is perhaps not always a fault, at least not a capital one.

Edgbaston,
April 22nd, 1828.

The three treatises on Christian Love Faith and Hope form a series, though that on Love was the first, and that on Hope the last, of the Author's larger works, the three having been published respectively in 1828, 1852, and 1858.

The Author often expressed his surprise that no other book had been exclusively devoted to the praise and inculcation of Christian Love, and he derived much pleasure from his having in any degree supplied the deficiency. The subject has always had this disadvantage, that the practice of any one writing upon it must be consistent with his book, or it would, as far as he was known, have little other effect than that of a satire on himself. Those who really knew our Author have ever testified that his life exemplified and enforced his precepts. The Editor recollects the volume being once quoted against him, but it was by a man towards whom he had ever practised forbearance and forgiveness. The Author was much delighted that his work was approved by two readers more than ordinarily qualified to judge of it: one of them well acquainted with life as having sustained a high part in it, and the other as having keenly mused in solitude on the ways and feelings of men; they were the Chief Justice Bushe and the Poet Wordsworth. The latter introduced himself to the Author after a service at Carrs Lane, saying, that for a long time it had been one of his cherished wishes to see and speak to the Author of "Christian Charity."

Each of the treatises has a preface by the Author.

CONTENTS.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY EXPLAINED.

	PAGE
Preface	iii
The Occasion of Paul's Enjoining Christian Charity	9
The Nature of Charity	18
True Christian Love distinguished from Spurious Candour	36
Love necessary to the Christian Character	48
The Perfection of Christian Love	66
The Meekness of Love	78
The Kindness of Love	94
The Contentment of Love	103
The Humility of Love	125
The Decorum of Love	139
The Disinterestedness of Love	158
The Unsuspiciousness of Love	169
The Joy of Love	178
The Candour of Love	193
The Self-denial of Love	217
The Eternal Nature of Love	226
Heaven a state of Perfect Knowledge	240
The Pre-eminence of Love	255
Improvement by Way of Instruction	275
Improvement by Way of Self-examination and Humiliation	320
Improvement by Way of Exhortation	335

THE COURSE OF FAITH.

	PAGE
Preface	359
Faith in General	368
Faith in Relation to Justification . . .	400
Faith in Relation to Sanctification . .	426
The Joy of Faith	453
The Work of Faith	479

CHAPTER I.

THE OCCASION OF PAUL'S ENJOINING CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

THE credibility of the Gospel, as a revelation from heaven, was attested by miracles, as had been predicted by the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." This prophecy began to receive its accomplishment when our Lord entered upon his public ministry, but was yet more remarkably fulfilled according to the testimony of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance;" and still continued to be fulfilled, till the power of working miracles was withdrawn from the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ ceased not, during his continuance on earth, to prove, by these splendid achievements, the truth of his claims as the Son of God; and constantly appealed to them in his controversy with the Jews, as the reasons and the grounds of faith in his communica-

tions. By him the power of working miracles was conferred on his apostles, who in the exercise of this extraordinary gift, cast out demons, and "healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." Christ also assured them, that under the dispensation of the Spirit, which was to commence after his decease, their miraculous powers should be so much enlarged and multiplied, as to exceed those which had been exercised by himself. This took place on the day of Pentecost, when the ability to speak all languages, without previous study, was conferred upon them. The apostles, as the ambassadors and messengers of their risen Lord, were authorised and enabled to invest others with the high distinction; for to confer the power of working miracles was a prerogative confined to the apostolic office. This is evident from many parts of the New Testament. But while apostles only could communicate this power, any one, not excepting the most obscure and illiterate member of the churches, could receive it; as it was not confined to church officers, whether ordinary or extraordinary. It is probable that these gifts were sometimes distributed among all the original members of a church: as the society increased, they were confined to a more limited number, and granted only to such as were more eminent among the brethren, till at length they were probably restricted to the elders: thus being withdrawn from the church as gradually as they had been communicated.

These miraculous powers were of various kinds, which are enumerated at length in the epistle to the Romans. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us

prophesy according to the proportion (analogy) of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." They are set forth more at length in the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues."

It is not necessary that I should here explain the nature, and trace the distinction of these endowments; a task which has been acknowledged by all expositors to be difficult, and which is thought by some to be impossible. They constituted the light which fell from heaven upon the church, and to which she appealed as the proofs of her divine origin. It is not easy for us to conceive of anything so striking and impressive, as a community of men thus remarkably endowed. We may entertain a general, though not an adequate idea of the spiritual glory which shone upon an assembly, where one member would pour forth, in strains of inspired

eloquence, the profoundest views of the divine economy; and would be succeeded by another, who in the exercise of the gift of knowledge, would explain the mysteries of truth concealed under the symbols of the Jewish dispensation; where one, known perhaps to be illiterate, would rise, and in a language which he had never before studied, descant without hesitation and without embarrassment on the sublimest topics of revealed truth; and would be followed by another, who in the capacity of an interpreter, would render into the vernacular tongue all that had been spoken; where one would heal the most inveterate diseases of the body with a word, and another discern by a glance the secrets of the mind, and disclose the hypocrisy which lurked under the veil of the most specious exterior. What seeming confusion, and yet what real grandeur, must have attended such a scene! What were the disputations of the schools, the eloquence of the forum, or the martial pomp, the accumulating wealth, the literary renown, of the Augustan age of the Roman Empire, to this extraordinary spectacle! Yea, what was the gorgeous splendour of the temple of Solomon, in the zenith of its beauty, compared with this? Here were the tokens and displays of a present though invisible Deity: a glory altogether unearthly and inimitable, and on that account the more remarkable.

For the possession and exercise of these gifts, the church at Corinth was eminently distinguished. This is evident from the testimony of Paul: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

so that ye come behind in no gift:" and in another place he asks them "What is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches?" It is indeed both a humiliating and an admonitory consideration, that the church which, of all those planted by the apostles, was the most distinguished for its gifts, should have been the least eminent for its graces; but this was the case with the Christian society at Corinth. What a scandalous abuse and profanation of the Lord's supper had crept in! What a schismatical spirit prevailed! What a connivance at sin existed! What resistance to apostolic authority was set up!

To account for this, it should be recollected that the possession of miraculous gifts by no means implied the existence and influence of sanctifying grace. Those extraordinary powers were entirely distinct from the qualities which are essential to the character of a real Christian. They were powers conferred not at all, or in a very subordinate degree, for the benefit of the individual himself, but were distributed, according to the sovereignty of the divine will, for the edification of believers, and the conviction of unbelievers. Hence saith the apostle, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." Our Lord, also, has informed us that miraculous endowments were not necessarily connected with, but were often disconnected from, personal piety. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart

from me, ye workers of iniquity." Paul supposes the same thing in the commencement of this chapter, where he says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." This hypothetical mode of speech certainly implies that gifts and grace are not necessarily connected. This is a very awful consideration, and, by showing how far self-deception may be carried, ought to be felt as a solemn admonition to all professing Christians, to be very careful and diligent in the great business of self-examination.

It is evident, both from the nature of things, and from the reasoning of the apostle, that some of the miraculous powers were more admired, and therefore more popular, than others. The gift of tongues, as is plain from the reasoning in the fourteenth chapter, appears to have been most coveted, because eloquence was so much esteemed by the Greeks; a talent for reasoning and declaiming in public was much admired, and the practice was exceedingly common: schools were established to teach the art, and places of public resort were frequented to display it. Hence in the church of Christ, and especially by those whose hearts were unsanctified by Divine grace, and who converted miraculous operations into a means of personal ambition, the gift of tongues was the most admired of all these extraordinary powers. A desire after conformity to the envied distinctions of the world, has ever been the

snare and the reproach of many of the members of the Christian community. Where distinctions exist, many evils will be sure to follow, as long as human nature is in an imperfect state. Talents, or the power of fixing attention and raising admiration, will be valued above virtues: and the more popular talents will occupy, in the estimate of ambition, a higher rank than those that are useful. Consequently, we must expect, wherever opportunities present themselves, to see, on the one hand, pride, vanity, arrogance, love of display, boasting, selfishness, conscious superiority, and a susceptibility of offence; while on the other, we shall witness an equally offensive exhibition of envy, suspicion, imputation of evil, exultation over failures, and a disposition to magnify and report offences. Such passions are not entirely excluded from the church of God, at least during its militant state; and they were most abundantly exhibited among the Christians at Corinth. Those who had gifts were too apt to exult over those that had none; while the latter indulged in envy and ill-will towards the former: those who were favoured with the most distinguished endowments, vaunted of their achievements over those who attained only to the humbler powers; and all the train of the irascible passions were indulged to such a degree as well nigh to banish Christian love from the fellowship of the faithful. This unhappy state of things the apostle found it necessary to correct, which he did by a series of most conclusive arguments; such, for instance, as that all these gifts are the bestowments of the Spirit, who in distributing them, exercises a wise but irresponsible sovereignty; that they are all bestowed for mutual

advantage, and not for personal glory; that this variety is essential for general edification; that the useful ones are to be more valued than those of a more dazzling nature; that they are dependent on each other for their efficiency; and he then concludes his expostulation and representation, by introducing to their notice that heavenly virtue, which he so beautifully describes in the chapter under consideration, and which he exalts in value and importance above the most coveted miraculous powers. "Now, ye earnestly desire (for this is the true rendering,) the best gifts, but yet I show unto you a more excellent way." "Ye are ambitious to obtain these endowments which shall cause you to be esteemed as the most honourable and distinguished persons in the church; but notwithstanding your high notions of the respect due to those who excel in miracles, I now point out to you a way to still greater honour, by a road open to you all, and in which your success will neither produce pride in yourselves, nor excite envy in others. Follow after charity, for the possession and exercise of this grace is infinitely to be preferred to the most splendid gift."

Admirable encominm, exalted eulogium on charity! What more could be said, to raise it in our esteem, and to impress it upon our heart? The age of miracles is past; the signs, tokens, and powers which accompanied it, and which, like brilliant lights from heaven, hung in bright effulgence over the church, are vanished. No longer can the members or ministers of Christ confound the mighty, perplex the wise, or guide the simple enquirer after truth, by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; the control of the laws of nature, and

of the spirits of darkness, is no longer intrusted to us; but that which is more excellent and more heavenly remains; that which is more valuable in itself, and less liable to abuse, continues; and that is charity. Miracles were but the credentials of Christianity, but charity is its essence; miracles but its witnesses, which, having ushered it into the world and borne their testimony, retired for ever; but charity is its very soul, which, when disencumbered of all that is earthly, shall ascend to its native seat, the paradise and the presence of the eternal God.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF CHARITY.

In the discussion of every subject, it is of great importance to ascertain, and to fix with precision, the meaning of the terms by which it is expressed; more especially in those cases where, as in the present instance, the principal word has acquired, by the changes of time and the usages of society, more senses than one. Formerly, the English word charity signified good-will or benevolence: when restricted to this meaning, it was significant enough of the Greek term adopted by the apostle in this chapter; but in modern times the word charity is often employed to signify almsgiving, a circumstance which has thrown a partial obscurity over many passages of Scripture, and has led, indeed, to the most gross perversion of Divine truth, and the circulation of the most dangerous errors. That the charity which is the subject of the present treatise cannot mean almsgiving, is evident from the assertion of the apostle, where he says, "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." The meaning of the term is love, and so it is rendered in many other passages of the New Testament; such, for instance, as the following: "Love

worketh no ill to his neighbour." "The fruit of the Spirit is love." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Faith which worketh by love." It is the same word in all these texts, which, in the present chapter, and in the following passages, is rendered charity. "The end of the commandment is charity." "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." The employment of the term charity, instead of love, in the last quoted passage, is peculiarly to be regretted, as, in consequence of the modern meaning attached to it, many have taken up the false and dangerous notion, that pecuniary liberality to the poor will make an atonement for human guilt; an error which could have had no countenance from Scripture, had the word been rendered as it is in other places, "Love covereth a multitude of sins." This is not the only case in which our translators, by the capricious employment in different places of two English words for the same Greek term, have helped to confuse the English reader of the Holy Scriptures. I shall in this treatise substitute for charity the word love, which is a correct translation of the original. If, however, the word charity should be occasionally used to avoid a too frequent repetition of love, I beg that it may be understood as synonymous with that term.

Of what kind of love does the apostle treat? Not of love to God, as is evident from the whole chapter; for the properties which are here enumerated have no direct reference to Jehovah, but relate in every instance to man. It is a disposition founded upon love to God, but it is not itself love to God.

Nor is it, as some have represented, the love of the brethren. Without all question, we are under special obligations to love those who are the children of God,

and with us joint heirs with Christ. "This is my commandment," says Christ, "that ye love one another." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Our brethren in Christ should be the first and dearest objects of our regard. Love to them is the badge of discipleship, the proof, both to ourselves and to the world, that we have passed from death unto life. And although we are "to do good unto all men," yet we are especially to regard "the household of faith." But still, brotherly love, or the love of the brethren as such, is not the disposition which is here enjoined, any otherwise than that it is included in it.

A far more comprehensive duty is laid down, which is love to mankind in general.* As a proof of this, I refer to the nature of its exercises. Do they not as much respect the unconverted as the converted; the unbeliever as the believer? Are we not as much bound to be meek, kind, humble, forgiving, and patient toward all men, as we are towards our brethren? Or, may we be envious, passionate, proud, and revengeful towards "those that are without," though not towards "those that are within?" We have only to consider the operations and effects of love as here described, and to recollect that they are as much required in our intercourse with the world, as with the church, to per-

* "This benevolence does not stop at intelligent beings, but goes forth with entire good-will to the sensitive creation, to all that are capable of pleasure or pain. Surely in the love which is the fulfilling of the law, must be comprehended that mercy which causeth a righteous man to regard the life and comfort of his beast, since this is a part of moral goodness which God hath seen fit to approve." But in this chapter the apostle limits the objects of our benevolence to man.

ceive at once, that it is love to man, as such, that is the subject of this chapter. Nor is this the only place where universal philanthropy is enjoined. The apostle Peter, in his chain of graces, makes this the last link, and distinguishes it from "brotherly kindness," to which, says he, add "charity," or, as it should be rendered, "love." The disposition inculcated in this chapter, is that love which Peter commands us to add to brotherly kindness; it is, in fact, the state of mind which is the compendium of the second table of the moral law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The temper so beautifully set forth by Paul, is a most lively, luminous, and eloquent exposition of this summary of our duty to our neighbour given us by our Lord.

Strange indeed would it be, if Christianity, the most perfect system of duty as well as of doctrine that God ever gave to the world, should contain no injunction to cultivate a spirit of general good-will. Strange indeed, if that system which rises upon the earth with the smiling aspect of universal benevolence, did not breathe its own spirit into the hearts of its believers. Strange indeed, if while God loved the world, and Christ died for it, the world in no sense was to be an object of a Christian's regard. Strange indeed, if the energies, exercises, and propensities of true piety, were to be confined within the narrow boundaries of the church, and to be allowed no excursions into the widely extended regions that lie beyond it, and to have no sympathies for the countless millions by which those regions are peopled. It would have been regarded as a blank in Christianity, as a deep wide chasm, had philanthropy found no place, or but a small one, amidst

its duties; and such an omission must ever have presented a want of harmony between its doctrines and its precepts; a point of dissimilarity between the perfection of the divine, and the required completeness of the human, character. Here, then, is the disposition inculcated; a spirit of universal love; good-will to man; a delight in human happiness; a carefulness to avoid whatever will lessen, and to do whatever will increase, the amount of the felicity of mankind; a love that is limited to no circle; that is restricted by no partialities, no friendships, no relationships; around which neither prejudices nor aversions are allowed to draw a boundary; which realises as its proper objects, friends, strangers, and enemies; which requires no recommendation of any one, but that he is a man, and which searches for man wherever he is to be found. It is an affection which binds its possessor to all of his kind, and makes him a good citizen of the universe. We must possess domestic affections, to render us good members of a family; we must have the more extended principles of patriotism, to render us good members of the state: and for the same reason, we must possess universal benevolence, to render us good members of a system which comprises the whole human race. This is the generic virtue, the one simple principle, out of which so many and such beautiful ramifications of holy benevolence are evolved. All the actings of love, so finely described by the apostle, may be traced up to this delight in happiness; they all consist in doing that which will promote the comfort of others, or in not doing that which will hinder their peace; whether they consist in passive or in active properties, they have a direct bearing on the general well-being.

It will be proper to remark here, that by universal benevolence, I mean nothing that bears the most distant resemblance to the spurious philanthropy advocated some few years since by a school of modern infidels, who resolved all virtue into a chimerical passion for the public good; and the characteristic feature of whose system was, to build up general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness. Reason and revelation unite in teaching us, that in the development of the passions, we must advance from private to public affections, and that extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of individual regards.*

But although I represent this love as consisting in a principle of universal benevolence, I would remark, that instead of satisfying itself with mere speculations on the desirableness of the well-being of the whole, or with mere good wishes for the happiness of mankind in general; instead of that indolent sentimentalism, which would convert its inability to benefit the great body into an excuse for doing good to none of its members, it will put forth its energies, and engage its activities, for those which are within its reach; it would, if it could, touch all however remote; but as this cannot be done, it will exert a beneficial influence on those that are near; it will feel its distance from the circumference of its circle a motive to greater zeal in promoting the comfort of all that are at hand, and it will consider that the best and only way of reaching the distant, is by an impulse given to whatever is nearest. It will view every individual it has to do with, as a representative of his species, and consider him as preferring strong claims, both on his own account, and on account of his race. Towards all,

* See Mr. Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity.

it will retain a feeling of good-will, a preparedness for benevolent activity; and towards those who come within the sphere of its influence, it will go forth in the actings of kindness. Like the organ of vision, it can dilate to comprehend, though but dimly, the whole prospect; or it can contract its view, and concentrate its attention upon each individual object that comes under its inspection. The persons with whom we daily converse and act, are those on whom our benevolence is first and most constantly to exert itself, because they are those parts of the whole, which give us the opportunity of calling into exercise our universal philanthropy. But it is not to be confined to them either in feeling or action; for as we have opportunity, we are to do good to all men, and to send abroad our beneficent regards to all the family of man.

Nor are we to confound this virtue with mere natural amiability of disposition. It is often our lot to witness a species of kindness, which, like the painting or the bust, is a very near resemblance of the original; but which still is only a picture or a statue, and wants the mysterious principle of life. From that mere good-will to man which even unconverted persons may possess, the love described by the apostle differs in the following particulars.

1. It is one of the fruits of regeneration. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Unless a man be born of the Spirit, he can do nothing that is spiritually good. We are by nature corrupt and unholy, destitute of all love to God, and till renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of our mind, we can do nothing well-pleasing to God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;"

and this love of our species is a part of the new creation. It is in the strictest sense of the term, a holy virtue, and one great branch of holiness itself; for what is holiness, but love to God, and love to man? And without that previous change which is denominated being "born again," we can no more love man as we ought to do, than we can love God. Divine grace is as essentially necessary for the production and exercise of philanthropy, as it is for piety; and the former is no less a part of religion than the latter. Love is the Divine nature, the image of God, which is communicated to the soul of man by the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost.

2. This love is the effect of faith: hence it is said by the apostle, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." And by another inspired writer it is represented as a part of the superstructure which is raised on the basis of faith; "Add to your faith love." It is certain that there can be no proper regard to man, which does not result from faith in Christ. It is the belief of the truth which makes love to be felt as a duty, and which brings before the mind the great examples and the powerful motives furnished by the Scriptures to promote its exercise. Nothing spiritually excellent can be performed without faith. It is by faith alone that any thing we do is truly and properly religion: this is the identifying Christian principle, separate and apart from which whatever excellence men may exhibit is but mere morality. By faith we submit to the authority of God's law; by faith we are united to Christ, and "receive from his fulness, and grace for grace;" by

faith we contemplate the love of God in Christ; by faith our conduct becomes acceptable to God through Christ.

3. This love is exercised in obedience to the authority of God's word. It is a principle, not merely a feeling; it is cultivated and exercised as a duty, not merely yielded to as a generous instinct; it is submission to God's command, not merely the indulgence of our own propensities; it is the constraint of conscience, not merely the impulse of constitutional tenderness. It may be, and often is, found where there is no natural softness or amiableness of temper: where this exists it will grow with greater rapidity, and expand to greater magnitude, and flourish in greater beauty, like the mountain ash in the rich mould of the valley; but it still may be planted, like that noble tree, in a less congenial situation, and thrive, in obedience to the law of its nature, amidst barrenness and rocks. Multitudes, who have nothing of sentimentalism in their nature, have love to man; they rarely can melt into tears, or kindle into rapture, but they can be all energy and activity for the relief of misery, and for the promotion of human happiness: their temperament of mind partakes more of the frigid than of the torrid, and their summer seasons of the soul are short and cold; but still, amidst their mild and even lovely winter, charity, like the rose of Pæstum, blooms in fragrance and in beauty. This is their rule "God has commanded me to love my neighbour as myself; and in obedience to him, I restrain my natural tendency, and forgive the injuries, and relieve the miseries, and build up the comfort, and hide the fault of all around me."

4. It is founded upon, and grows out of, love to God.

We are to love God for his own sake, and men for God's sake. Our Lord has laid down this as the order and rule of our affections. We must first love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and then our neighbours as ourselves. Now, there can be no proper religious affection for our neighbour, which does not spring out of supreme regard for Jehovah; since our love to our neighbour must respect him as the offspring and workmanship of God: "and if we love not him that begat, how can we love him that is begotten of him?" Besides, as we are to exercise this disposition in obedience to the authority of God, and as no obedience to his authority, which is not an operation of love, can be valuable in itself, or acceptable to him, no kindness to our neighbour which does not arise out of a proper state of heart towards God can come up to the nature of the duty here enjoined. "We love anything more truly and properly, the more explicitly we acknowledge and love God in it. Upon the view of those strokes and lineaments of the Divine pulchritude, and the characters of his glory, which are discernible in all his creatures, our love should someway be commensurate with the creation, and comprehend the universe in its large and complacential embraces. Though, as anything is of higher excellency, and hath more lively touches and resemblances of God upon it, or by the disposition of his providence and law, more nearly approaches us and is more immediately represented to our notice, converse, use, or enjoyment; so our love should be exercised towards it more explicitly, in a higher degree, or with more frequency. As man, therefore, hath in him more of Divine resemblance of God's natural likeness and image, good men, of his moral holy image, we ought to

love men more than the inferior creatures, and those that are good and holy more than other men; and those with whom we are more concerned, with a more definite love, and which is required to be more frequent in its exercise; but all from the attractive of somewhat Divine appearing in the object. So that all rational love, or that is capable of being regulated and measured by a law, is only so far right in its own kind, as we love God in everything, and everything upon his account, and for his sake. The nature and spirit of man is, by the apostacy, become disaffected and strange to God, alienated from the Divine life, addicted to a particular limited good, to the creature for itself, apart from God; whereupon the things men love are their idols, and men's love is idolatry. But, when, by regeneration, a due propension towards God is restored, the universal good draws their minds; they become inclined and enlarged towards it: and, as that is diffused, their love follows it, and flows towards it everywhere. They love all things principally in and for God; and therefore such men most, as excel in goodness, and in whom the Divine image more brightly shines."*

Let us, then, remember that the beautiful superstructure of philanthropy which the apostle has raised in this chapter, has for its foundation a supreme regard for the great and blessed God. The utmost kindness and sympathy, the most tender compassion, united with the most munificent liberality, if it do not rest on the love of God, is not the temper here set forth; is not the grace which has the principle of immortality in its nature, and which will live and flourish in eternity, when faith and hope shall cease. Human excellence, however dis-

* Howe on Charity in Reference to other Men's Sins.

tinguished, whatever good it may diffuse to others, or whatever glory it may draw around itself, if it be not sanctified and supported by this holy principle, is corruptible and mortal, and cannot dwell in the presence of God, nor exist amidst the glories of eternity; but it is only the flower of the grass which shall wither away in the rebuke of the Almighty. For want of this vital and essential principle of all true religion, how much of amiable compassion, and of tender attention to the woes of humanity; how much of kindly feeling and active benevolence is daily expended, which, while it yields its amiable though unrenewed professor much honour and delight, has not the weight of a feather in the scales of his eternal destiny!

5. This disposition is cherished in our hearts by a sense of God's love in Christ Jesus to us. There is this peculiarity in the morality of the New Testament, that it is not only enforced by the consideration of the Divine power, but by a distinct and repeated reference to the Divine goodness. Not that any motive is absolutely necessary to make a command binding upon our conscience, beyond God's right to issue it; the obligation to duty is complete in the absence of every other consideration than the rightful authority of the command: but as man is a creature capable of being moved by appeals to his gratitude, as well as by motives addressed to his fear, it is both wise and condescending on the part of Jehovah thus to deal with him, and to "make him willing in the day of his power." He thus not only drives us by the force of his terrors, but draws us by the cords of his love. The great evangelical inducement to mutual affection between man and man, is God's love in Christ Jesus to us. God has commended

and manifested his love to us in a manner that will fill immensity and eternity with astonishment: He has "so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This stupendous exhibition of Divine mercy is presented by the sacred writers, not only as a source of strong consolation, but also as a powerful motive to action; we are not only to contemplate it for the purpose of joy, but also of imitation. Mark the beautiful reasoning of the apostle John: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Similar to this is also the inference of Paul: "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." How forcible, yet how tender is such language! There is a charm in such a motive which no terms can describe. The love of God, then, in its existence and contrivance from eternity; in its manifestation in time, by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; in its topless height, its fathomless depth, its measureless length and breadth; is the grand inducement to universal affection. And is it not enough to soften a heart of stone, to melt a heart of ice? The love spoken of in the chapter under consideration, is that desire to benefit our fellow-men which is given us by the cross of Christ: it is not mere natural kindness, but it is love for Christ's sake; it is not the mere

operation of a generous temper, but it is the feeling which moved in the apostle's breast, when he exclaimed, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" it is not natural religion, but Christianity: it is, so to speak, a plant which grows on Calvary and entwines itself for support around the cross. It is a disposition which argues in this way: Has God indeed thus loved me, so as to give his Son for my salvation? and is he kind to me daily for the sake of Christ? Has he forgiven all my numberless and aggravated transgressions? Does he still, with infinite patience, bear with all my infirmities and provocations? Then what is there, in the way of most generous affection, I ought not to be willing to do, or to bear, or to sacrifice, for others? Do they offend me? let me bear with them, and forgive them; for how has God forborne with me, and blotted out my sins! Do they want? let me be forward to supply their necessities; for how has God supplied mine! This, then, is love; that deep sense of God's love to us, which shows us the necessity, the reasonableness, the duty of being kind to others; the feeling of a heart, which, labouring under the weight of its obligations to God, and finding itself too poor to extend its goodness to him, looks round, and gives utterance to its exuberant gratitude in acts of kindness to man.

6. It is that good-will to men which, while its proximate object is the welfare of our fellow-creatures, is ultimately directed to the glory of God. It is the sublime characteristic of every truly Christian virtue, that whatever inferior ends it may seek, and through whatever intervening medium it may pass, it is directed ultimately to the praise of Jehovah: it may put forth its excellences before the admiring eyes of mortals,

and exert its energies for their happiness; but its highest aim must not be either to attract their applause, or to advance their interest. The rule of our conduct, as to its chief end, is thus explicitly and comprehensively laid down: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This is not mere advice, but a command; and it is a command extending to all our conduct. To glorify God is to act so that his authority shall be recognised and upheld by us in the world; it is to be seen submitting to his will, and behaving so as that his word and ways shall be better thought of by mankind. Our actions must appear to have a reference to God; and without this, they cannot partake of the character of religion, however excellent and beneficial they may seem.

But, perhaps, this disposition of mind will be best illustrated by exhibiting an example of it; and where shall I find one suited to our purpose? Every mind will, perhaps, immediately revert to Him who was love incarnate; and I might indeed point to every action of his benevolent career, as a display of the purest philanthropy; but, as his example will hereafter be considered, I shall now select one from men of like passions with ourselves; but I must go for it to "the chamber where the good man meets his fate," rather than to the resorts of the healthy and the active; for it seems as if the brightest beauties of this love were reserved, like those of the setting sun, for the eve of its departure to another hemisphere. How often have we beheld the dying Christian, who during long and mortal sickness has exhibited, as he stood on the verge of heaven, something of the spirit of a glorified immortal! The natural infirmities of temper which

attended him through life, and which sometimes dimmed the lustre of his piety, disquieted his own peace, and lessened the pleasure of his friends, had all departed, or had sunk into the shade of those holy graces which then stood out in bold and commanding relief upon his soul. The beams of heaven falling upon his spirit were reflected, not only in faith, the confidence in things not seen, not only in hope entering within the vail, but in love, the greatest in the trio of Christian virtues. How lowly in heart did he seem, how entirely clothed with humility! Instead of being puffed up with any thing of his own, or uttering a single boastful expression, it was like a wound in his heart to hear any one remind him either of his good deeds or dispositions; and he appeared in his own eyes less than ever, while like his emblem the setting sun, he expanded every moment into greater magnitude, in the view of every spectator. Instead of envying the possessions or the excellences of other men, it was a cordial to his departing spirit that he was leaving them thus distinguished; how kind was he to his friends! and as for enemies, he had none; enmity had died in his heart; he forgave all that was manifestly evil, and kindly interpreted all that was only doubtfully so. Nothing lived in his recollection, as to the conduct of others, but their acts of kindness. When intelligence reached his ear of the misconduct of those who had been his adversaries, he grieved in spirit, even as he rejoiced when told of their regaining public esteem by deeds of excellence. His opinions seemed under the influence of his love; and, as he wished well, he believed well, or hoped well, of many of whom he had formerly thought evil. His meekness and patience

were touching, his kindness indescribable: the trouble he gave, and the favours he received, drew tears from his own eyes, and were acknowledged in expressions that drew tears from all around. There was an ineffable tenderness in his looks, and his words were the very accents of benignity. He was a pattern of all the passive virtues; and having thus thrown off much that was of the earth, earthly, and put on charity as a garment, and dressed himself for heaven, in its ante-chamber, his sick room, he departed to be with Christ, and be for ever perfect in love.

There was a man in whom this was realized, and some extracts from his invaluable memoir will prove it; I mean Mr Scott, the author of the Commentary. "His mind," says his biographer, "dwelt much upon love: God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Faith worketh by love. He seemed full of tenderness and affection to all around him. 'One evidence,' he said, 'I have of meetness for heaven: I feel much love to all mankind, to every man upon earth, to those who have most opposed and slandered me.' To his servants he said, 'I thank you for all your kindness to me. If at any time I have been hasty and short, forgive me, and pray to God to forgive me; but lay the blame upon me, not upon religion.' "His tender affection for us all is astonishing in such a state of extreme suffering, and cuts us to the heart. He begged his curate to forgive him, if he had been occasionally rough and sharp. 'I meant it for your good; but, like everything of mine, it was mixed with sin; impute it not, however, to my religion, but to my want of religion.' He is so gentle and loving, it is so delightful to attend upon him, that his servants,

finding themselves in danger of contention which should wait upon him, agreed to take it by turns, that each might have her due share of the pleasure and benefit; and yet he is continually begging our forgiveness for his want of patience and thankfulness. His kindness and affection to all who approached him were carried to the greatest height, and showed themselves in a singularly minute attention to all their feelings, and whatever might be for their comfort, to a degree that was quite affecting, especially when he was suffering so much himself often in mind as well as body. There was an astonishing absence of selfish feelings: even in his worst hours he thought of the health of us all; observed if we sat up long, and insisted on our retiring; and was much afraid of paining or hurting us in any way. Mr D. said something on the permanency of his Commentary: 'Ah!' he cried, with a semi-contemptuous smile; and added, 'you know not what a proud heart I have, and how you help the Devil.' He proceeded: 'There is one feeling I cannot have, if I would: those that have opposed my doctrine, have slandered me sadly; but I cannot feel any resentment; I can only love and pity them, and pray for their salvation. I never did feel any resentment towards them; I regret that I did not more ardently long and pray for their salvation.' "

Can we conceive of a more beautiful exemplification of the virtue I am describing? and this is the temper we ought all to seek. This is love, blended with all our living habits, diffused through all our conduct, forming our character, breathing in our desires, speaking in our words, beaming in our eyes; in short, a living part of our living selves. And this, be it remembered, is religion, practical religion.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN LOVE DISTINGUISHED FROM THAT SPURIOUS CANDOUR WHICH CONSISTS IN INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT, OR IN CONNIVANCE AT SINFUL PRACTICES.

A SEPARATE and entire section is devoted to this distinction of love from a counterfeit resemblance of it, because of the importance of the subject, and the frequency with which the mistake is made of confounding things which are so different from each other. No terms have been more misunderstood or abused, than candour and charity. Some have found in the use of them an act of toleration for all religious opinions, however opposed to one another or to the word of God, and a bull of indulgences for all sinful practices which do not transgress the laws of our country: so that by the aid of these two words, all truth and holiness may be driven out of the world; for if error be innocent, truth must be unimportant; and if we are to be indulgent towards the sins of others, under the sanction and by the command of Scripture, holiness can be of no consequence either to them or to ourselves.

If we were to hearken to some, we should conceive of charity, not as she really is, a spirit of ineffable beauty, descending from heaven upon our distracted

earth, holding in her hand the torch of truth which she has lighted at the fountain of celestial radiance, and clad in a vest of unsullied purity; and as she enters upon the scene of discord, proclaiming "glory to God in the highest," as well as "peace on earth, good-will to men:" and having, with these magic words, healed the troubled waters of strife, proceeding to draw men closer to each other, by drawing them closer to Christ, the common centre of believers; and then hushing the clamours of contention, by removing the pride, ignorance, and depravity which produced them: no; but we should think of her as a lying spirit, clad, indeed, in some of the attire of an angel of light, but bearing no heavenly impress, holding no torch of truth, wearing no robe of holiness; smiling, perhaps, but like a sycophant, upon all without distinction; calling upon men, as they are combating for truth and striving against sin, to sheathe their swords, and cast away their shields, to be indulgent towards each other's vices, and tolerant of each other's errors; because they all mean and feel substantially alike, though they have different modes of expressing their opinions, and of giving utterance to their feelings. Is this charity? No: it is Satan in the likeness of Gabriel.

That there is much spurious candour in the world, and that it is advocated by great names, will appear by the following quotation from Dr. Priestley: "If we could be so happy as to believe that there are no errors but what men may be so circumstanced as to be innocently betrayed into; that any mistake of the head is very consistent with rectitude of heart; and that all differences in modes of worship, may be only the different methods, by which different men, who are equally the

offspring of God, are endeavouring to honour and obey their common parent, our difference of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem." Dr. Priestley, and the followers of his religious system, are not peculiar in this sentiment. Pope's Universal Prayer is to the same effect:

> "Father of all, in every age,
> In every clime adored,
> By saint, by savage, or by sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

The well-known metrical adage of this poet is adopted, to the full extent of its spirit and design, by great multitudes who suppose that they are quite orthodox both in opinion and practice, and who perhaps boast of their charity, while they exclaim,

> "For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight,
> He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

It is, I imagine, generally thought by at least a great part of mankind, that it is of little consequence what a man's religious opinions are, provided his conduct be tolerably correct; that charity requires us to think well of his state; and that it is the very essence of bigotry to question the validity of his claim to the character of a Christian, or to doubt of the safety of his soul: in other words, it is pretended that benevolence requires us to think equally well of men, whatever their religious opinions; and that it is almost a violation of the rule of love to attempt to unsettle their convictions, or to render them uneasy in the possession of their sentiments, although we may conclude them to be fundamentally wrong. But is this disregard of all opinions, or rather this

disposition to think well of persons as to their religious character, and the safety of their souls, whatever may be the doctrines they hold, an essential part of the nature of love? Most certainly not; it actually opposes it. Benevolence is good-will to men, but is a very different thing from a good opinion of their principles and practices: so different that the former may not only exist in all its force without the latter, but be actually incompatible with it: for if I believe that a man holds opinions that endanger his safety, benevolence requires not that I should shut my eyes to his danger, and lull him into false confidence, but that I should bear my testimony and express my fears concerning his situation. Benevolence being nothing more than a desire to promote happiness, is a very different thing from complacency or esteem, which are founded on approbation of character. The question, whether love is to be confounded with indifference to religious principle, (for the spurious candour I am contending against amounts to this,) is best decided by an appeal to Scripture. How decisive are such passages as the following: "Ye shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." With what emphasis did the apostle speak of the conduct of those who attempted to pervert the great doctrine of justification by faith, by introducing the obsolete ceremonies of the Jewish law: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you,

let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Now, certainly, this was anything but indifference to religious opinion: for, be it observed, it was matter of opinion, and not the duties of morality, or of practical religion, that was here so strenuously opposed. The apostle commands Timothy "to hold fast the form of sound words: and to give himself to doctrine." The apostle John has this strong language: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Jude commands us "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." From these, and many other passages which might be quoted, it is evident, not only that truth is important and necessary to salvation, but that error is guilty, and in many instances is connected with the loss of the soul. If a man may disbelieve one truth, and yet be free from sin for so doing, he may disbelieve two; and if two, four; and if four, ten; and if ten, half the Bible; and if half the Bible, the whole; and if he may be a Deist and yet be in a safe state, he may be an Atheist and still go to heaven. To such awful lengths may the principle be pushed, that there is no guilt in mental error. "Let those," says Dr. Priestley, "who maintain that the mere holding of opinions (without regard to the motives and state of the mind through which men may have been led to form them,) will necessarily exclude them from the

favour of God, be particularly careful with respect to the premises from which they draw so alarming a conclusion." Nothing can be more sophistical than this passage; for we do not, in asserting the guiltiness of a false opinion, leave out the state of the heart; but contend that all errors in the judgment have their origin in the depravity of our nature, and, in so far as they prevail, discover a heart not brought into subjection to Christ. A perfectly holy mind could not err in the opinion it derived from the Word of God: and it may be most fairly presumed that there are certain fundamental truths, which cannot be rejected, without such a degree of depravity of heart, as is utterly incompatible with true piety towards God.

It is to be recollected that the holiness required in the Word of God, is a very superior thing to what is called morality. Holiness is a right state of mind towards God, and it is enforced by motives drawn from the view which the Scriptures give us of the divine nature, and of the divine conduct towards us. If our views of God, and of his scheme of mercy, be false, the motives which influence us cannot be correct. Hence, all right feeling and conduct are traced up by the sacred writers to the truth. Do they speak of regeneration? they tell us we are "begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word." Do they speak of sanctification? they ascribe it, so far as instrumentality is concerned, to the truth; and the truth itself is characterized as a "doctrine according to godliness." It is evident, that without the truth, or in other words, without right opinions, we can neither be born again of the Spirit, nor partake of true holiness. The whole process of practical and experimental religion

is carried on by the instrumentality of right sentiments; and to suppose that holiness could be produced in the soul as well by error as by truth, is not only contrary to revelation, but no less contrary to reason. If truth sanctify, error must in some way or other pollute; for to suppose that two causes, not only so distinct, but so opposite, can produce the same effect, is absurd; accordingly the Scriptures every where insist upon the importance of the truth, not merely on its own account, but on account of its moral effect upon the soul.

If this view of the subject be correct, Christian charity cannot mean indifference to religious sentiment; for if so, it would be a temper of mind in direct opposition to the Scriptures; nor are we required by this virtue to give the least countenance to what we think is error. For this opinion we may, indeed, be called bigots; indeed this term, in the lips of many, means nothing more than reproach for attaching importance to right sentiments. No word has been more misunderstood than this. If by bigotry is meant such an overweening attachment to our opinions as makes us refuse to listen to arguments; such a blind regard to our own views as closes the avenues of conviction; such a selfish zeal for our own creed as actually destroys benevolence, and causes us to hate those who differ from us; it is an evil state of mind, manifestly at variance with love: but if it means with those who use it, as is generally the case, only zeal for truth, it is perfectly consistent with love and actually a part of it, for "charity rejoiceth in the truth." It is quite compatible with good-will to men, therefore, to attach high importance to doctrines, to condemn error, to deny the christianity and safety of those who withhold their

assent from fundamental truths, and to abstain from all such religious communion with them, as would imply in the least possible degree any thing like indifference to their opinions. It appears to me that the most perfect benevolence to men, is that which, instead of looking with complacency on their errors, warns them of their danger, and admonishes them to escape. It is no matter that they think they are right, this only makes their case the more alarming; and to act towards them as if we thought their mistaken views of no consequence, is only to confirm their delusion, and to aid their destruction. It is true we are neither to despise them nor persecute them: we are neither to oppress nor ridicule them: we are to look upon them, neither with haughty scorn, nor with callous indifference: but whilst we set ourselves against their errors, we are to pity them with unaffected compassion, and to labour for their conversion with disinterested kindness. We are to bear with unruffled meekness all their provoking sarcasms; and to sustain, with deep humility, the consciousness of our clearer perceptions; and to convince them, that with the steadiest resistance of their principles, we unite the tenderest concern for their persons.*

And if charity does not imply indifference to religious opinions, so neither does it mean connivance at sin. There are some persons whose views of the evil of sin are so dim and contracted, or their good nature is so accommodating and unscriptural, that they make all kinds of excuses for men's transgressions, and allow of any latitude for human frailty that is asked. With

* See two Sermons by Dr Wardlaw, entitled, "Man responsible for his Religious Belief."

them, the greatest sins, if they are not committed against the laws of society, are reduced to mere infirmities of our fallen nature, which should not be visited with harsh censure; and as for lesser ones, they are mere specks upon a bright and polished surface, which nothing but the most fastidious precisian would ever notice. Such persons censure, as sour and rigid ascetics, all who oppose and condemn iniquity; revile them as uniting in malignant opposition to the cheerfulness of society the dregs of puritanism and barbarism; and reproach them as being destitute of all the charities and courtesies of life. But if candour be confounding the distinctions between sin and holiness, depreciating the excellence of the latter, and at the same time, diminishing the evil of the former; if it necessarily lead us to connive with an easy and good-natured air at iniquity, and to smile with a kind and gentle aspect upon the transgressions which we witness; then it must be something openly at variance with the letter and the spirit of revelation: and surely that candour which runs counter to the mind of God, cannot be the love on which St. Paul passes such a eulogium in this chapter. We are told by the Word of God that sin is exceedingly sinful; that it is the abominable thing which God hates; that the wages of it are death; that we violate the law by an unholy feeling: we are commanded to abstain from its very appearance; we are warned against excusing it in ourselves, or in each other; we are admonished to reprove it, to resist it, and to oppose it, to the uttermost. Certainly, then, it cannot be required by the law of love, that we should look on sin with a mild and tolerant eye. Love to man

arises out of love to God; but can it be possible to love God, and not to hate sin? It is the fruit of faith, but faith purifies the heart; it is cherished by a sense of redeeming love, but the very end of the scheme of redemption is the destruction of sin. Indulgence of men in their sins, and connivance at their iniquity, instead of being an act of benevolence, is the greatest cruelty: hence the emphatic language of God to the Israelites, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Would it be benevolence to connive at conduct by which any individual was bringing disease upon his body, or ruin upon his prospects? If not, how can it be benevolent to leave him, without warning, to do that which will involve his soul in ruin? To think more lightly of the evil of sin than the Word of God does; to call that good or even indifferent, which it calls evil; to make allowances for human frailty which it does not make; to frame excuses for sin which it disallows; to lull the consciences of men, by considerations in extenuation of guilt which it forbids; or to do any thing to produce other views and feelings in reference to iniquity, than such as are warranted by the Scripture, is not charity, but a participation in other men's sins.

It is the nature of charity, I admit, not to be hasty to impute evil motives to actions of a doubtful nature; not to take pleasure in finding out the faults of others; not to magnify them beyond the reality, but to make all the allowance that a regard to truth will allow; to hope the best in the absence of proof; and to be willing to forgive an offence when it has been committed against

ourselves; but to go beyond this, and to let our charity degenerate into a complaisance which is afraid to rebuke, oppose, or condemn sin, lest we should offend the transgressor, or violate the law of courtesy, or subject ourselves to the reproach of being a censorious bigot; to court the good-will, and promote the self-satisfaction of others, by conniving at their sins; to seek to ingratiate ourselves into their affections, by being indulgent to their vices; is to violate the law of the first and of the second tables at once; and to forget every obligation which we are laid under, both to love God and our neighbour. If this be candour, it is no less opposed to piety than to humanity, and can never be the love enjoined in so many places in the New Testament. No, no; Christian charity is not a poor old dotard, creeping about the world, too blind to perceive the distinction between good and evil; or a fawning sycophant, too timid to reprove the bold transgressor, and smiling with parasitical complacency upon the errors and iniquities of the human race: but a vigorous and healthy virtue, with an eye keen to discern the boundaries between right and wrong; a hand strong and ready to help the transgressor out of his miserable condition; a heart full of mercy for the sinner and the sufferer; a disposition to forgive rather than revenge, to extenuate rather than to aggravate, to conceal rather than to expose, to be kind rather than severe, to be hopeful of good rather than suspicious of evil; but withal, the inflexible friend of holiness, and the uncompromising enemy of sin. We are not allowed, it is true, to be scornful and proud towards the wicked, or censorious towards any one; we are not to make the most distant

approach to the pharisaism which says, "Stand by, I am holier than thou!" we are not to hunt for the failings of others; nor when we see them without hunting for them, to condemn them in a tone of arrogance, or with a spirit of acerbity: but still we must maintain a demeanour, which while it reflects the beauty of the God of love, no less brightly reflects his glory as the God of holiness and the God of truth.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE NECESSARY TO THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

A DISTINCTION has been introduced into the subject of religion, which, although not wholly free from objection, is sufficient to answer the purpose for which it is employed; I mean that which is said to exist between essentials and non-essentials. It would be a difficult task to trace the boundary line by which these classes are divided; but the truth of the general idea cannot be questioned, that there are some things, both in faith and practice, which, for want of perceiving the grounds of their obligation, we may neglect, and yet not be destitute of true religion; while there are others, the absence of which necessarily implies an unrenewed heart. Among the essentials of true piety must be reckoned the disposition we are now considering. It is not to be classed with those observances and views, which, though important, are not absolutely essential to salvation: we must possess it, or we are not Christians now, and shall not be admitted into heaven hereafter. The apostle has expressed this necessity in the clearest and the strongest manner. He has put an hypothetical case of the most impressive kind, which I shall now illustrate. "Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, and have not charity, I am become as

sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." By the tongues of men and of angels, we are not to understand the powers of the loftiest eloquence, but the miraculous gifts of tongues, accompanied by an ability to convey ideas with the same effect as those celestial beings. Should a man be invested with these stupendous endowments, and employ them in the service of the gospel; still if his heart were not a partaker of love, he would be no more acceptable to God than was the clangour of the brazen instruments employed in the idolatrous worship of the Egyptian Isis, or the noise of the tinkling cymbals which accompanied the orgies of the Grecian Cybele. Such a man's profession of religion would be not only worthless but offensive in the sight of God. The comparison is remarkably strong, inasmuch as it refers not to soft melodious sounds, as of the flute or of the harp, not to the harmonious chords of a concert, but to the harsh dissonance of instruments of the most inharmonious character: and if, as is probable, the allusion be to the noisy clank of idolatrous musicians, the idea is as strongly presented as it is possible for the force of language to express it.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Paul here still alludes to miraculous endowments. Prophecy in the Scripture use of the term is not limited to the foretelling future events, but means speaking by inspiration of God; and its exercise in this instance, refers to the power of explaining without premeditation or mistake, the typical and predictive parts of the Old Testament dispensation, together with the facts and

doctrines of the Christian economy. "The faith that could remove mountains," is an allusion to an expression of our Lord's, which occurs in the gospel history: "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place: and it shall remove." This faith is of a distinct nature altogether from that by which men are justified and become the children of God. It has been called the faith of miracles, and seems to have consisted in a firm persuasion of the power or ability of God to do any miraculous thing for the support of the gospel. It operated two ways: by a belief on the part of the person who wrought the miracle, that he was the subject of a divine impulse, and called at that time to perform such an act; and by a belief on the part of the person on whom a miracle was about to be performed, that such an effect would be really produced. Now the apostle declared, that although a man had been gifted with prophecy, so as to explain the deepest mysteries of the Jewish or the Christian systems, and in addition possessed that miraculous faith by which the most difficult and astonishing changes would have been effected, he was nothing, and less than nothing, without love.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." This representation of the indispensable necessity of love is most striking; it supposes it possible that a man may distribute all his substance in acts of apparent beneficence, and yet after all be without true religion. Actions derive their moral character from the motives under the influence of which they are performed: and

many which are beneficial to man, may still be sinful in the sight of God, because not done from a right inducement. The greatest liberality, if prompted by pride, vanity, or self-righteousness, is of no value in the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah: on the contrary, it is very sinful. But is it not too evident to be questioned, that many of the alms-deeds of which we are the witnesses, are done from any motives but the right ones? We can readily imagine that multitudes are lavish in their pecuniary contributions, who are at the same time totally destitute of love to God, and love to man: and if destitute of these sacred virtues, they would be, as it respects real religion, less than nothing, although they spent every farthing of their property in relieving the wants of the poor. If our munificence, however great or self-denying, be the operation of mere selfish regard to ourselves, to our own reputation, or to our own safety, and not of pure love, it may do good to others, but will do none to ourselves. "And though I give my body to be burned," as a martyr to religion, "and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Whether such a case as this ever existed we know not; it is not impossible, nor improbable; but if it did, not the tortures of an agonizing death, nor the courage that endured them, nor the seeming zeal for religion which led to them, would be accepted in lieu of love to man. Such an instance of self-devotedness must have been the result either of that self-righteousness, which substitutes its own sufferings for those of Christ, or of that love of fame which scruples not to seek it even in the fires of martyrdom; in either case it partakes not of the nature, nor will receive the reward, of true religion.

It will help you to see the necessity and importance

of this temper of mind, if I bring into a narrow compass the many and various representations of it which are to be found in the New Testament.

1. It is the object of the Divine decree in predestination. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

2. It is the end and purpose of the moral law. "The end of the commandment is charity (love)." Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

3. It is the evidence of regeneration. "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God."

4. It is the necessary operation and effect of saving faith. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

5. It is that grace by which both personal and mutual edification is promoted. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth." "Maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love."

6. It is the proof of God dwelling in us and of our dwelling in God. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

7. It is declared to be the greatest of all the Christian virtues. "The greatest of these is charity (love)."

8. It is represented as the perfection of religion. "Above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness."

What encomiums are these! what striking proofs of the supreme importance of the disposition now under consideration! Who has not been guilty of some neglect of it? Who has not had his attention drawn too much from it? Who can read these passages of Holy Writ, and not feel convinced that not only mankind in general, but the professors of spiritual religion also, have too much mistaken the nature of true piety? What are clear and orthodox views, what are strong feelings, what is faith, what is enjoyment, what is freedom from gross immorality, without this spirit of pure and universal benevolence? Whether an instance, I repeat, ever existed of an individual whose circumstances answered to the supposition of the apostle, I cannot determine; the statement certainly suggests a most alarming idea of our liability to self-deception in reference to our personal religion. Delusion on this subject prevails to an extent truly appalling. Millions are in error as to the real condition of their souls, and are travelling to perdition, while according to their own idea, they are journeying to the celestial Canaan. Oh, fearful mistake! Oh, fatal imposture! What terrible disappointment awaits them! What horror, anguish, and despair, will take eternal possession of their souls, in that moment of revelation, when instead of awaking from the sleep of death amidst the glories of the heavenly city, they shall lift up their eyes, "being in torment." No pen can describe the overwhelming anguish of such a disap-

pointment, and the imagination shrinks with amazement and torture from the contemplation of her own faint sketch of the insupportable scene. To be led on by the power of delusion so far as to commit an error of consequence to our temporal interests; to have impaired our health, our reputation, or our property, is sufficiently painful, especially where there is no prospect, or but a faint one, of repairing the mischief: yet, in this case, religion opens a balm for the wounded spirit, and eternity presents a prospect where the sorrows of time will be forgotten. But, O! to be in error as to the nature of religion itself, and to build our hope of immortality on the sand, instead of the rock; to see the lamp of our deceitful profession, which had served to illumine us in life, and even to guide us in false peace through the dark valley of the shadow of death, suddenly extinguished as we cross the threshold of eternity, and leave us in rayless endless night, instead of quietly expiring amidst the blaze of everlasting day! Is such a delusion possible? Has it ever happened in one solitary instance? Do the annals of the unseen world record one such case, and the prison of lost souls contain one miserable ghost that perished by delusion? Then what deep solicitude to avoid the error of a self-deceived mind, ought the possibility of such an event to circulate through the hearts of all. Is it possible to be mistaken in our judgment of our state? Then how deeply anxious ought we to be, not to be misled by false criteria in forming our decision. But what if, instead of one case, millions have occurred, of souls irrecoverably lost by self-deception? What if delusion is the most crowded avenue to the bottomless pit? What if it is the common infatuation, the epidemic blindness,

which has fallen upon multitudes of the inhabitants of Christendom? What if this moral insanity has infected and destroyed very many who have made even a stricter profession of religion than others? How shall we explain, much more justify, that want of anxiety about their everlasting welfare; that destitution of care to examine into the nature and evidences of true piety; that willingness to be imposed upon, in reference to eternity, which many exhibit? Jesus Christ does tell us that "Many, in that day, shall say, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name?" to whom he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." He says that "Many are called, but few chosen." He says that of the four classes of those who hear the word, only one hears it to advantage. He says that of the ten virgins, to whom he likens the kingdom of heaven, five only were wise, while the other five were deceiving themselves with the unfed lamp of a deceitful profession. He intimates most plainly that self-deception in religion is fearfully common, and common amongst those who make a more serious profession than others. It is he that has sounded the alarm to awaken slumbering professors of religion from their security. It is he that has said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "I know thy works, how that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." How careful, then, ought we to be, not to be imposed upon by false evidences of religion, and not to conclude that we are Christians, while we are destitute of what the Word of God declares to be essential to genuine piety. We must have love, therefore, or all else is insufficient.

1. Some conclude, that because they are regular in their attendance upon the service of religion, they are

true Christians: they go punctually to church or to meeting, they receive the Lord's Supper, they frequent the meetings for social prayer, they perhaps repeat prayers in secret and read the Scriptures. All this is well, if it be done with right views, and in connexion with right dispositions: but it is the whole of their religion; a mere abstraction of devotional exercise; a thing separate and apart from the heart, and temper, and conduct; a business of the closet and of the sanctuary; a sort of composition paid to the Almighty, to be released from all the other demands of Scripture, and obligations of piety; an expression of their willingness to be devout in church, and on the Sabbath, provided they may be as earthly-minded, as selfish, as malicious, and as unkind, as they please, in all places and all times besides. This is not religion.

2. Others are depending upon the clearness of their views, and their attainments in evangelical knowledge. They pretend to a singular zeal for the truth, and are great sticklers for the doctrines of grace, with which they profess to have an acquaintance little short of inspiration. They look upon all besides a few of their own class, as mere babes in knowledge, or as individuals who, like the man in the gospel, have their eyes only half open, and who see "men as trees walking." They are the eagles who soar to the sun, and bask in his beams, while the rest of mankind are the moles that burrow, and the bats that flutter in the dark. Doctrine is every thing; clear views of the gospel are the great desideratum: and in their zeal for these things, they suppose they can never say things extravagant enough, nor absurd enough, nor angry enough, against good works, practical religion, or Christian temper. Puffed

up with pride, selfish, unkind, irritable, censorious, malicious, they manifest a total want of that humility and kindness which are the prominent features of true Christianity. Let it be known, however, that clear views, even where they have no resemblance to the monstrous caricatures and frightful deformities of modern Antinomianism, are of themselves no evidence of religion, any more than right theoretical notions of the constitution are the proofs of loyalty: and as a man with such notions in his mind may be a traitor in his heart, so may a professor of religion be an enemy to God in his soul, with an evangelical creed upon his tongue. Many profess to be very fond of the lamp of truth; grasp it firmly in their hands, admire its flame, pity or blame those who are following the delusive and meteoric fires of error; but after all, make no other use of it, than to illuminate the path that leads them to perdition: their religion begins and ends in adopting a form of sound words for their creed, approving an evangelical ministry, admiring the popular champions of the truth, and joining in the reprobation of fundamental error. As to any spirituality of mind, any heavenliness of affection, any Christian love, in short, as to the natural effects, the appropriate result, the vital, elevating influence, of the very doctrines to which they profess to be attached, they are as destitute of these as the veriest worldling; and like him, are perhaps selfish, revengeful, implacable, and unkind. This is the religion but too common in the present day, when evangelical sentiments are becoming increasingly popular; a religion but too common in our churches; a religion, cold, heartless, and uninfluential; a sort of lunar light, which reflects the beams of the sun, but not his warmth.

3. On the other hand, some are satisfied with the vividness and the violence of their feelings. Possessed of much excitability and warmth of temperament, they are, of course, susceptible of deep and powerful impression from the ordinances of religion. They are not without joy, for even the stony-ground hearers rejoiced for a while; and they are not without their religious sorrow. Their tears are plentiful, and their smiles in proportion. See them in the house of God, and none appear to feel more under the word than they. The sermon exerts an irresistible power over their affections, and the preacher seems to have their hearts at command. They talk loudly of "happy frames of mind," "precious seasons," "comfortable opportunities." But follow them from the house of God to their own habitations, and, O, how changed the scene! the least offence, perhaps an unintentional one, raises a storm of passion, and the man that looked like a seraph in the sanctuary, seems more like a fury at home: see them on a week-day, and you will find the man who appeared all for heaven on the Sunday, all for earth on the Monday: follow them from the assembly of the saints to the chief places of concourse, where they buy sell and get gain; and you will see the man who looked so devout, irritated and litigious, selfish and over-reaching, rude and insulting, envious and malicious, suspicious and defamatory. Yes; and perhaps in the evening of the same day, you will see him at a prayer meeting, enjoying, as he supposes, the holy season. Such is the delusion under which many are living. Their religion is, in great part, a mere susceptibility of impression from religious subjects; it is a selfish religious voluptuousness.

It is certain that more importance is oftentimes attached to "sensible enjoyment," as it is called, to lively frames of mind and feelings, than belongs to them. There is a great variety in men, not only as it respects the power of thinking, but also of feeling; some feel far more acutely than others: this is observable apart from godliness. The grace of God, in conversion, operates a moral, not a physical change: it gives a new direction to the faculties, but leaves the faculties themselves as they were: consequently, with equal depth of conviction and equal strength of principle, there will be various degrees of feeling in different persons: where susceptibility of the mind to impression, and liability to vivid feeling, existed before conversion, they remain after it; and often the lively emotion produced by affecting scenes, seasons, or sermons, is an operation partly of nature and partly of grace. A man may feel but little, and yet if that little lead him to do much, he has great piety notwithstanding. Of two persons that listen to an affecting fact, one is seen to weep profusely, and is overwhelmed by the story; the other is attentive and thoughtful, but neither weeps nor sobs. They retire: the former, perhaps, to wipe her tears, and to forget the misery which caused them: the latter to seek out the sufferer and relieve him. Which had most feeling? The former. Which most benevolence? The latter. The conduct of one was the result of natural disposition, that of the other the effect of principle. Take another illustration, still more in point. Conceive of two real Christians listening to a sermon, in which the preacher is discoursing from such a text as this: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one

another:" or this, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." His object, as that of every man who preaches from such a text should be, is to show that a sense of divine love to us, should fill us with benevolence towards others. In order to bring every heart to feel its obligations, he gives a vivid description of God's love to man; and then, while his hearers are affected with God's mercy, he calls upon them, in imitation of Jehovah, to relieve those who are in want; to bear with those who are vexatious; to forgive those who have injured them; to lay aside wrath, and abound in all expressions of genuine affection to their fellow-christians. One of the two hearers is deeply interested and affected by the first part of the discourse, sheds many tears, and is wrought up to a high pitch of feeling, while the preacher paints in glowing colours the love of God; the other hears with fixed attention, with genuine faith, the whole sermon, but his emotions are not powerful: he feels it is true, but it is a tranquil feeling, unattended by either smiles or tears. They go home; the latter perhaps in silence, the former exclaiming to his friends, "Oh, what a delightful sermon! what a precious season! did you ever hear the love of God so impressively, so beautifully described?" With all his feeling, however, he does not go forth to relieve one child of want, nor does he attempt to extinguish one angry or implacable feeling towards a person who has offended him; he is as passionate and unforgiving, as unkind and selfish, after the sermon as he was before he heard it. The other retires with more of calm reflection, than of strong emotion. Hearken to

his soliloquy "The preacher has given us a most astonishing idea of the love of God to us, and most clearly and effectually deduced from it our obligations to love one another. Am I interested in this love? What! has this ineffable grace lavished all its benefits on me, a rebel against God, upon me, a sinner; and shall I not feel this love constraining me to relieve the wants, to heal the sorrows, to forgive the offences, of my fellow-creatures? I will bear ill-will no longer; I will put out the spark of revenge while kindling; I will go in a spirit of meekness and of love, and forgive the offender, and be reconciled to my brother." By that grace on which he depended, he is enabled to act up to his resolution. He becomes, upon principle, upon conviction, more merciful, more meek, more affectionate. Which of the two has most feeling? The former. Which has most religion? The latter. Any emotion, however pleasurable and intense, that does not lead to action, is mere natural, not holy, feeling: while that, however feeble it may seem, which leads us to do the will of God, is unfeigned piety. In order to ascertain the degree of our religion, we must not merely ask how we feel under sermons, but how our feeling leads us to act afterwards. The operative strength of our principles, and not the contemplative strength of our feelings, is the test of godliness. All imaginative emotion, produced by a sense of God's love to us, which does not lead to a cultivation of the virtue considered in this treatise, is one of the delusive fires, which instead of guiding aright, misleads the souls of men.

4. It is to be feared that many, in the present day, satisfy themselves that they are Christians, because

of their zeal in the cause of religion. Happily for the church of God, happily for the world at large, there is now a great and general eagerness for the diffusion of knowledge and piety. Throwing off the torpor of ages, the friends of Christ are labouring to extend his kingdom in every direction. Almost every possible object of Christian philanthropy is seized upon; societies are organised; means adapted to every kind of instruments are employed; the whole levy en masse of the religious world is called out; and Christendom presents an interesting scene of benevolent energy. Such a state of things, however, has its dangers in reference to personal religion, and may become an occasion of delusion to many. It does not require genuine piety to associate us with these movements: we may give our property, from a natural liberality of disposition, or regard to reputation, or a desire of influence, or by the compulsion of example; for all these motives are no doubt in powerful operation, when giving is in fashion. And as to personal exertions, how many inducements may lead to them, besides a sincere and an ardent love to Christ; an inherent fondness for activity, a love of display, the spirit of party, the persuasion of friends, may all operate, and unquestionably do operate in many cases, to produce astonishing efforts in the cause of religious benevolence, where there is a total absence of genuine piety. The mind of man, prone to self-deception, and anxious to find some reason short of the true evidence of a renewed heart, to satisfy itself in reference to its eternal state, is too apt to derive a false peace from the contemplation of its zeal. In proportion as the cause of the delusion approximates to the nature of true

religion, is its power to blind and to mislead the judgment. If the mind can perceive any thing in itself or in its operations, which bears the semblance of godliness, it will convert it into a means of lulling the conscience and removing anxiety. To many persons the fatal opiate, the soul-destroying imposture, is their activity in the cause of Christian zeal: none are more diligent in their attendance at committees, none more constant at public meetings; others again weary themselves in their weekly rounds to collect the contributions of the rich, or the offerings of the poor. These things, if they do not lead them to conclude from cool reasoning that they are believers, take off their attention from the real condition of their souls, leave them no leisure for reflection, repress any rising fear, and either stifle the voice of conscience, or enable them to drown its remonstrances in listening to the eloquence of the platform, or in sharing the discussions of the committee room. We doubt not that some unworthy professors of religion in the present age resort to public meetings for the same reason as many a guilty votary of pleasure does to public amusements, to forget his own condition, and to turn away his ear, for a short season, from the voice that speaks to him from within. Persons are known to us all, who, with the greatest zeal for various religious institutions, are living in malice and all uncharitableness, in the indulgence of predominant selfishness and uncontrolled wrath. But this is not piety. Could we support the whole expenditure of the Missionary Society by our affluence, direct its counsels by our wisdom, and keep alive its energy by our ardour, if all the while we were destitute of love, we should

perish eternally, notwithstanding the munificence of our liberality.

And of those who are real believers, and have the grace of love, some are far more deficient in its influence and activity than they should be; and endeavour to quiet their accusing consciences with the wretched sophistry, "that as a Christian cannot be supposed to excel in every thing, their forte lies in the active virtues of religion, more than in the passive graces; and that, therefore, any little deficiency in the latter is made up by their greater abundance of the former." This reasoning is as false in its principle, as it is frequent, I fear, in its adoption. Where, in all the Word of God, is this composition for duties taught or sanctioned? This is carrying a surplus stock of one virtue to make good a deficiency in another, and is a Popish indulgence granted by a man to himself.

It is to be apprehended, that as every age is marked with a peculiar tendency, either to some prevailing error or defect, the tendency of the present age is to exalt the active virtues of piety, at the expense of the passive ones; and, while the former are forced into increasing luxuriance, to permit the latter to wither in their shade; or, at least, there is a disposition to devote to the culture of one, all the time and attention which ought to be shared between both. It cannot be denied that our love of activity and of display will generally incline us to prefer the cultivation of public spirit, rather than the more private and self-denying virtues of meekness, humility, and forbearance; for it is inconceivably more easy and pleasant to float upon the tide of public feeling toward the objects of religious zeal, than to

wade against the stream of our own corrupt tendencies, and to accomplish a self-reform which He only who sees in secret will duly appreciate.

5. May it not be said, that in many cases a profession of religion seems to release some individuals from all obligation to cultivate the dispositions which it necessarily implies; and that, instead of deriving from this circumstance a stimulus to seek after the Christian temper, they find in it a reason for general negligence? They have been admitted as members of a dissenting church, and have thus received, as it were, a certificate of personal religion; and instead of being anxious from that moment to excel in every virtue that can adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, they have fallen into carelessness and lukewarmness. A profession of religion, unsupported by Christian love, will only increase our guilt here, and sink us immeasurably lower in the bottomless pit hereafter. Woe, eternal woe, will be the portion of the man who bears the name of our Lord Jesus without his image. Woe, eternal woe, will be the doom of those members of our churches who are content to find their way into the fellowship of the faithful, without adding to their character the sacred virtue of love.

I have thus shown how many things there are, which, though good in themselves, when performed from right motives, and in connexion with other parts of religion, cannot, in the absence of love, be depended upon as unequivocal evidences of personal piety. Beware of self-deception in this awfully important matter, for it will be dreadful beyond the power of imagination to conceive, to find yourselves the moment after death amidst the horrors

of the infernal pit, instead of the felicities of the celestial city. Love is required by God as an essential part of true religion; and the total absence of it prevents a man from being a true Christian, as necessarily as the want of temperance or purity. Besides, it is the temper of heaven; it is the unvarying state of mind of the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; it is the heart of Jesus, and the image of God. Without it, there would be no meetness for the society of paradise, no fitness for an association of which the bond of fellowship is love; without it, there can be no grace here, and therefore no glory hereafter.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPERTIES OF CHRISTIAN LOVE, AS STATED BY THE APOSTLE.

By a beautiful personification, the Apostle has described this grace under the figure of an interesting female, who, like an angel of light, lifts her cherubic form and smiling countenance amidst the children of men; shedding, as she passes along, a healing influence on the wounds of society, hushing the notes of discord, driving before her the spirits of mischief, bringing the graces in her train, and converting earth into a resemblance of heaven. Her charms are sufficient to captivate every heart, if every heart were as it should be; and her influence such as every mind should court. "Love suffereth long, and is kind: love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

1. The first remark which I make on these properties, is, that they describe such expressions of our love as have a particular reference to our temper. By the temper, I mean the prevailing spirit and disposition

of the mind, as it respects the irascible or selfish affections; that all the qualities here enumerated have reference to this. There are other operations and manifestations of charity, besides those which are here specified; such, for instance, as justice and chastity, (for it is impossible to love mankind, and violate the rules of either of these duties;) but the apostle restricts his specification to those properties of it, which are comprehended in the word temper. Nothing surely can teach more clearly, or more impressively, the great truth, that religion must govern the temper, than this chapter. It is strange, but true, that many seem to think that temper is a part of man's self and conduct, over which religion has no legal jurisdiction. They admit their obligations to be holy, and moral, and devout; but they do not feel, at least do not acknowledge, that it is their duty to be meek, gentle, and kind. They may not affirm so much in words, but it is the secret principle of the system of conduct which they have adopted. Hence, although they are correct in their morals, and regular in their attendance on the means of grace, they are withal so apt to receive offence, and so forward to give it; they are either so passionate, or so sullen; so implacable or revengeful; that the real excellences of their character are lost sight of in the deep shadow of their iufirmities, and the ways of godliness are spoken ill of on their account. This arises from their not being sufficiently convinced of the evil of such infirmities; and this blindness is itself the consequence of a supposition that the removal of the evil is physically impossible. "Our temper," say they, "is as much a part of ourselves as the colour of our skin, or the conformation of our body; it is naturally inherent in us,

and we cannot help it." As long as this is the conviction of the judgment, or the admission of a deceitful heart, it is almost vain to hope for a reformation. But let me reason with such persons.

It must be admitted that there do exist constitutional tendencies to the exercise of particular passions, whether the cause be wholly in the body or partly in the mind also. Nay, these constitutional tendencies are not less hereditary, sometimes, than recognized physical diseases. One man is naturally propense to passion; another to sullenness; a third to envy; a fourth to pride: all this is indisputable. But these tendencies are not uncontrollable; they impel, but do not constrain; they incite, but do not compel. It would subvert the whole system of moral obligation, to suppose that we were under a physical necessity of sinning, which we certainly should be, if inherent tendencies were beyond the power of moral restraint. That cannot be a duty which a man can not do if he would; nor can that be sin, which he cannot avoid by any exercise of disposition or will. If, therefore, we cannot help indulging revenge, envy, pride, unkindness, they are no sins; and in this case, would such vices have been condemned by Scripture, if there were an impossibility in the way of avoiding them? Certainly not. It is no actual sin to have the liability; the guilt consists in indulging it. If the existence of constitutional propensities be an excuse for their indulgence, the licentious man may plead it in justification of his sensuality; for he may have stronger incitement to his besetting sin, than many others who run not to the same excess of riot. But if licentiousness or cruelty cannot be excused on this ground, why should anger, revenge, or envy?

Once let it be granted that physical tendency is an excuse for any kind of sinful indulgence, no matter of what kind, and you overturn the whole system of Christian morals. Besides, natural propensities of the most impetuous kinds have been, in innumerable instances, not only successfully resisted, but almost entirely vanquished. Persons who were once addicted to all kinds of impure gratifications, have become as distinguished for chastity as they were once for lewdness: drunkards have become sober; men as furious as enraged tigers, have become gentleness itself. It is said of that eminently holy and useful man, Mr Fletcher of Madeley, "that he was meek like his Master, as well as lowly in heart. Not that he was so by nature, for he was a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular; and so much so, that he frequently spent the greater part of the night bathed in tears, imploring victory over his own spirit. And he did not strive in vain. He did obtain the victory in a very eminent degree. Yea, so thoroughly had grace subdued nature; so fully was he renewed in the spirit of his mind; that for many years before his death, I believe he was never observed by any one, friend or foe, to be out of temper on any provocation whatever." The testimony that Bishop Burnet bears to Archbishop Leighton, might be borne of him with equal propriety. "After an intimate acquaintance with the Archbishop for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private, I must say I never heard an idle word drop from his lips; I never saw him in any temper in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death. What a testimony! What a character! But it is not the beauty, the inexpressible

moral loveliness of it alone which should be remarked, but the convincing proof which it furnishes that a naturally bad temper may be subdued. Many instances of this kind have existed, which accumulate accusation and reproach upon the man who indulges in a sinful constitutional tendency of any kind, under the idea that it is not only absolutely invincible, but altogether irresistible. That every thing which pertains to our physical nature will remain after our conversion, is true, for grace produces no change in the bodily organization; and that occasional ebullitions of inherent natural temper will occur in our renewed state, is allowed, for very few attain to Mr. Fletcher's eminence of piety; but if we are as passionate and revengeful, as proud and envious, as selfish and unkind, as we were before our supposed conversion, we may be assured that it is but a supposed conversion. It is nothing that we go regularly to worship; it is nothing that we feel under sermons; it is nothing that we have happy frames of mind and feelings; for a heart under the predominant influence of irascible passions can no more have undergone the change of the new birth, than one that is filled with a prevailing lasciviousness. And where the heart is renewed, and the badness of the temper is not constant, but only occasional, is not regnant, but only prominent, it is, in so far as it prevails, a deduction from real piety. True it is, that inherent natural tendency will require more vigorous resistance and unsleeping vigilance, more laborious effort, more painful mortification, more earnest prayer, on the part of those who are conscious of it, than is necessary on theirs in whom it does not exist. It is not uncommon for such persons to be contented with a few feeble struggles, and

then to flatter themselves with the idea that there is more grace displayed in those efforts than in the conduct of others, who, being naturally good-tempered, are never exposed to their temptations. To adorn religion will certainly cost them far more labour than it does those of a better natural temper; just as a man afflicted with a weakly constitution, or a chronic disease, must take more pains with himself than one who has sound health, and he will, after all, look more sickly than that other; but as his bodily malady does exist, he must give himself this trouble, or he cannot rationally expect the least share of health; so it is with the soul; if the disease of an evil temper be there, immense and unwearied pains must be taken to resist and repress it. This is what is meant by our "plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand;" by "denying ourselves;" by "mortifying the deeds of the body;" by "the spirit struggling against the flesh;" by "casting aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us." The subjection of our temper to the control of religion, is a thing which must be done. It is that to which we must apply ourselves, as to a matter of indispensable necessity; it is an object which we must accomplish by any mortification of feeling, and by any expenditure of labour. The virtues which I am about to consider will spring up in no soil without culture; but there are some soils which are peculiarly unfriendly to their growth, and in which productions of an opposite kind thrive spontaneously, and grow with frightful luxuriance: with these greater pains must be taken, and greater patience exercised, till at length the beautiful imagery of the prophet shall be realised, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar

shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." But for effecting such a transformation there must be a degree of labour and painstaking, which very few are willing to endure: "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." To obtain this victory over ourselves, much time must be spent in the closet, much communion with God must be maintained, much strong crying with tears must be poured forth. We must undergo what the apostle calls by a term very appropriate, as well as strikingly descriptive, a "crucifixion;" we must "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof;" "we must keep," or as the word signifies, "beat under our body;" we must bring our mind, from time to time, under the influence of redeeming grace; we must ascend the hill of Calvary, and gaze upon that scene of love, till our cold hearts melt, our hard hearts soften, and all the cruel selfishness of our nature relaxes into gentleness; we must make all the doctrines of the gospel, with all the motives they contain, bear upon our nature: the example of the meek and lowly Jesus must be contemplated, admired, and copied; and especially after all must we breathe forth internal longings for the influence of the Holy Ghost, without whose aid our souls will no more yield to the influence of motive, than the polar ice will melt by the feeble beams of the great northern constellation. We must pray for the Spirit; long for the Spirit; expect the Spirit; live, walk, struggle in the Spirit. Thus must we set ourselves to work to obtain more of that love, which alone can subdue our evil temper.

2. The properties here enumerated are all included in love, and must all be sought by every real Christian.

The general disposition includes all these particular and distinct operations, and opposes all these separate evils: it is as much opposed to envy as to revenge, and is as humble as it is kind. Consequently, we are not to select for ourselves such modes of its operation as we may think most adapted to our taste and to our circumstances; giving to these all our attention, and neglecting the rest. One is not to say, "I am most inclined to kindness, and I shall cherish this property, which I find to be more easy and pleasant than to cultivate humility and meekness." Another is not to say, "I find no great difficulty in forgiving injuries, and I shall practise this: but as for envy, I am so propense to it, that I shall give up all attempts to eradicate this weed from my heart." This parcelling out of the disposition, and selecting that part which is most congenial to our constitutional tendency, will not do. Yet is the attempt made by many, who to appease in some measure the clamorous importunity of their conscience, and at the same time to avoid the obligation of benevolence as a whole, thus impose upon themselves with a supposed attention to some partial view of the subject. They carry on a wretched and useless attempt to balance those points in which they succeed, against those in which they fail; their excellences against their defects. It may be said, in reference to this law of our duty, as well as to the still more comprehensive one, that "He that offendeth but in one point is guilty of all," for that authority which saith, "Be ye kind," saith also, "Thou shalt not think evil of thy neighbour." These amiable properties must go together; the general principle which comprises them must be taken as a whole. It is one

and indivisible, and as such must be received by us. "Charity is the bond of perfectness." Like the band round the sheaf, it holds all the separate ears together. Instead, therefore, of allowing ourselves to select, we must open our hearts to its whole and undivided influence; and if, indeed, there be one of its properties in which we are more than ordinarily deficient, to that one we must direct a still greater portion of our attention.

3. These properties are perfectly homogeneous. They are of the same nature, and are therefore, helpful to each other. In reality, if we cultivate one, we are preparing the way for others. There is no contrariety of influence, no discordant operation, no clashing demands. When we are rooting up one evil by love, we drag up others with it: when we subdue pride, we weaken our susceptibility of offence: when we cherish kindness, we impoverish selfishness. This is an immense advantage in the cultivation of the Christian temper; and it shows us if there be one besetting sinful propensity in the heart, it throws a dark and chilling shadow over the whole soul. The subjugation of this one bad temper will weaken many others that depend for existence upon its support; and make way for an opposite excellence, which is as extensively beneficial as the other was injurious. This is a powerful incentive to the arduous and necessary duty of self-improvement: an evil disposition eradicated is a good one implanted; and one good one implanted is a way made for others to follow.

4. As these properties, while they are separate as to their nature, all unite in a common and generic disposition our first and chief attention must be to that

which is the common principle. These tempers are so many modes in which love operates, so many streams from a common fountain, so many branches from the same root. While, therefore, we seek to guide the separate streams, and trim the different branches aright, our care must be exercised chiefly in reference to the parent source and stock. We must aim steadily, and labour constantly, at the increase of love itself. We must do every thing we can to strengthen the principle of benevolence to man. In every step of your progress through the treatise before us, you must constantly keep in mind its connection with this great master principle. The way to abound in the effects is to increase the power of the cause.

5. We should recollect that these properties are to be expected only in proportion to the degree in which love itself exists in the heart. On reading this chapter, and seeing what is required of the Christian, and comparing it with the usual conduct of religious people, we feel almost involuntarily led to say, "If this be love, where then, except in heaven, is it to be found?" To this I reply, the apostle does not say that every man who pretends to this virtue acts thus: nor does he say that every one who possesses it, acts thus in all instances, but that love itself does it. This is the way in which it acts, when allowed to exert its own energies; if it were suffered to have its full scope, and to bear sway in us without any check, this would be its invariable effect; our not seeing, therefore, a perfect exemplification of this principle, is no proof that it does not possess these properties, but only that we are imperfectly under its influence. This branch of piety,

like every other, may be possessed in various degrees: and of course it is only in proportion as we possess the disposition that we shall manifest its operations. This should prepare us to distinguish between the utter want and the weakness of love; a distinction necessary on account of our proneness to despondency in reference to ourselves, and to censoriousness in reference to our neighbours.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEEKNESS OF LOVE.

"Charity suffereth long:" "is not easily provoked."

I CLASS these two together, because they bear a near affinity to each other. The word in the original translated "suffereth long," signifies "to have a long mind," to the end of whose patience provocations cannot easily reach. It does not mean patience in reference to the afflictions which come from God, but to the injuries and provocations which come from man; perhaps the most correct idea which can attach to it is forbearance; a disposition which, under long-continued offences, holds back anger, and is not hasty to punish or revenge. Its kindred property, here classed with it, is nearly allied to it, "is not easily provoked," or "is not exasperated." The word signifies a violent emotion of the mind, a paroxysm of anger; so that the distinction between the two terms appears to be this; the property intended by the latter seems to be the power of love to curb our wrath, and that intended by the former, its ability to repress revenge.

There are three things which Christian love, in reference to the irascible passions, will prevent.

1. An irritable and petulant disposition. There is

in some persons an excessive liability to be offended: a morbid sensibility which is kindled to anger by the least possible injury, whether that injury is intentional or unintentional. They are all combustible, and ignite by a spark. A word, nay, a look, is enough to inflame them. They are ever ready to quarrel with any or every body; and remind us of what Cromwell said of John Lilburne, that he was so quarrelsome, that if he could find nobody else to quarrel with, John would quarrel with Lilburne, and Lilburne with John. The whole soul seems one entire sensitiveness of offence. Instead of "suffering long," they do not suffer at all; and instead of not being easily provoked, they are provoked by any thing, and sometimes by nothing. Love will prevent all this, and produce a disposition the very reverse. It is concerned for the happiness of others; and will not wantonly afflict them and render them wretched, by such an exhibition of unlovely and unchristian temper. It will remove this diseased sensibility; and without blunting the natural feelings, will calm this sinful excitability. Many things it will not see or hear, judging them quite beneath its dignity to notice; others it will pass by, as not of sufficient consequence to require explanation. It will keep a strict guard over its feelings, holding the reins with a tight hand. Its first business is with the disposition itself. This is important for us to notice: for if we indulge the feeling of anger, it will be impossible to smother the flame in our bosom: like the burning materials of a volcano, it will at length burst out in fiery eruptions.

Here then is our first object, to gain that forbearance which does not allow itself to be irritated or soured; to acquire that command, not only over our words and

actions, but over our emotions, which will make us patient and tranquil amidst insults and injuries, which will keep down the temperament of the soul, and preserve the greatest coolness. Irritability, I know, is in part a physical quality; but it is in our power, by God's help, to calm it. Love will make us willing to think the best of those with whom we have to do; it will disarm us of that suspicion and mistrust which make us regard every body as intending to injure us; will cause us to find out pleas for those who have done us harm; and when this is impossible, will lead us to pity their weakness or forgive their wickedness.

What an enemy to himself is an irritable man! He is a self-tormentor of the worst kind. He is scarcely ever at peace. His bosom is always in a state of tumult. To him the calm sunshine of the breast is unknown. A thousand petty vexations disturb his repose, trivial, but withal as tormenting, as the gnats which by myriads inflict their stings upon a poor animal exposed to their attack. Unhappy man! even though he so far succeed as to restrain the agitations of his mind from bursting out into passion, yet has he the burning within. Regard to his own happiness, as well as the happiness of others, calls upon him to cultivate that love which will allay the inflammatory state of his mind, and restore a soundness which will not be thus wounded by every touch.

2. The next thing which love prevents is immoderate anger; that anger which the apostle has described in the expression we are now elucidating, as amounting to a paroxysm of wrath; or which in ordinary language we call, "being in a passion." It would be to oppose both reason and revelation to assert that all anger is sin. "Be ye angry," saith the apostle, "and sin not." A

violent suppression of the natural feelings is not perhaps the best expedient for obviating their injurious effects; and though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotion of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive is perhaps best allayed by its natural and temperate expression: not to say that it is a wise provision of nature for the repression of injury, and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society. A wise and temperate expression of our displeasure against injuries or offences, is by no means incompatible with Christian love; but this grace checks those furious sallies of our wrath which are tormenting to ourselves, and injurious to those with whom we have to do. Sinful anger is lamentably common, and is not sufficiently subdued among the professors of religion. In cases of offence they are too often excited to criminal degrees of passion; their countenance is flushed, their brow lowers, their eyes dart indignant flashes, and their tongue pours forth loud and stormy words of reviling accusations.

To diminish and prevent this disposition, let us dwell much upon the evil consequences of it.

It disturbs our peace, and interrupts our happiness: and this is an evil about which we ought not to be indifferent. A passionate man cannot be a happy man; he is the victim of a temper, which, like a serpent, dwells in his bosom to sting and torment him.

It destroys the comfort of those with whom he has to do; his children often bear the fury of the tempest; his wife has her cup of conjugal felicity embittered by the gall; his servants tremble at the rage of a tyrant; and those with whom he transacts the business of this life dread the gusts of his passion, by which they have

often been rendered uncomfortable. He is a common disturber of the circle in which he moves.

It interrupts his enjoyment of religion, brings guilt upon his conscience, and unfits him for the season and the act of communion with God. A beautiful illustration of this part of the subject may be here introduced from one of the most striking of English writers: "Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of our recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts: it is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness: and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer; and therefore is contrary to that intention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back by the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighings of its wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man: when his affairs have required

business, and his business was matter of discipline, and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of charity, his duty met with the infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument; and the instrument became stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest, and overruled the man: and then his prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention; and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose the prayer; and he must recover it when his anger is removed, and his spirit is becalmed; made even as the brow of Jesus, and smooth as the heart of God; and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the holy dove, and dwells with God till it returns, like the useful bee, laden with a blessing and the dew of heaven."*

Sinful anger dishonours religion, and causes the ways of godliness to be spoken ill of. The mists of passion envelope religion with a dense medium through which its lustre is but dimly seen. A passionate Christian is an object of sport to the profane, a butt of ridicule to fools, whose scorn is reflected from him upon piety itself.

But perhaps it will be said, "Tell us how we may cure this disposition; its existence we admit, and its evil we know by experience, and deplore."

Look at the disposition as it really is: attentively consider its evil nature, and trace its mischievous consequence. "Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend propulsion and defence, displeasure and revenge; it is a short madness,

* Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

and an eternal enemy to discourse, and sober counsels, and fair conversation: it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over. It hath in it the trouble of sorrow, and the heats of lust, and the disease of revenge, and the bodings of a fever, and the rashness of precipitancy, and the disturbance of persecution. If it proceed from a great cause, it turns to fury; if from a small cause, it is peevishness; and so it is always terrible or ridiculous. It makes a man's body deformed and contemptible, the voice horrid, the eyes cruel, the face pale or fiery, the gait fierce. It is neither manly nor ingenuous, and is a passion fitter for flies and wasps than for persons professing nobleness and bounty. It is a confluence of all the irregular passions. There is in it envy and scorn, fear and sorrow, pride and prejudice, rashness and inconsideration, rejoicing in evil, and a desire to inflict it."* Such is the portraiture of this disposition, drawn by the hand of no mean artist. Let the passionate man look at the picture, and learn to hate it; for like an infuriated serpent, it need only to be seen to be abhorred.

Reject all excuses for the indulgence of it; for so long as we palliate it, we shall not attempt to mortify it. It cannot be defended either on the ground of constitutional tendency, or the greatness of the provocation, or the suddenness of the offence, or the transient duration of the fit, or that there is less evil in gusts of anger than in seasons of sullenness: no, nothing can justify it; and if we are sincere in our desires to control it, we shall admit that it is indefensible and criminal, and condemn it without hesitation or extenuation.

* Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

Be persuaded that it is possible to control it; for if we despair of victory, we shall not engage in the conflict. Hope of success is essential to success itself. It is certain that by using right means, a hasty temper may be subdued, for it has been conquered in very many instances. It is said of Socrates, the wisest and most virtuous of the heathen sages, that in the midst of domestic vexations and public disorders, he maintained such an undisturbed serenity, that he was never seen to leave his own house or return to it with a ruffled countenance. If on any occasion he felt a propensity to anger, he checked the rising storm by lowering the tone of his voice, and resolutely assuming a more than usual gentleness of aspect and manner. He not only refrained from acts of revenge, but triumphed over his adversaries by disregarding the insults and injuries they offered him. This was more remarkable, as in acquiring this dominion over his passions, he had to struggle against natural propensities which ran in an opposite direction. On an eminent physiognomist declaring that he discovered in the features of the philosopher, evident traces of many vicious inclinations, the friends of Socrates who were present, ridiculed the ignorance of this pretender to extraordinary sagacity; but the sage ingenuously confessed that he was naturally prone to vice, but that he had subdued his inclinations by the power of reason and philosophy. Let professing Christians learn from this heathen, that it is possible to subdue natural temper, however bad and however violent it may be.

Make its cure a matter of desire. What we ardently long for, we shall vigorously pursue. Confess your sin, frankly say, "I am indeed too irritable, too passionate,

too revengeful. I see the sinfulness of indulging such a temper; I am disturbed and disgraced by it; and by God's help I will subdue it. I will spare no pains, shrink from no sacrifice, be discouraged by no defeat, till I gain the victory over myself."

Meditate upon the patience of God, who bears with your innumerable offences against Him, and forgives them all. Consider the example of Jesus Christ, who meekly "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and amidst ingratitude, insults, and provocations of the basest kind, was mild as the morning sun in autumn."

Seek to acquire a habit of self-control, a power over your feelings, which shall enable you to be ever on your guard, and to repress the first emotions of passion. If possible, seal your lips in silence when the storm is rising; shut up your anger in your own bosom; and like fire that wants air and vent, it will soon expire. Angry words often prove a fan to the spark: many persons who in the beginning are but slightly displeased, talk themselves at length into a violent passion. Never speak till you are cool: the man who can command his tongue will find no difficulty in governing his spirit. And when you do speak, let it be in meekness: "a soft answer turneth away wrath." When you see others angry, let it be an admonition to you to be cool: thus you will receive the furious indiscretions of others like a stone into a bed of moss, where it will lie quietly without rebounding.

Stop your anger in the beginning. It is easier to put out a spark than a conflagration. It would be well always to terminate the conversation, and quit the company of an individual, when anger is creeping in. "Go

from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge."

Avoid disputations, which often engender strife; and especially avoid them in reference to persons of known irritability. Who would contend with a snake or a hornet?

Brood not over injuries; "Else," says Mr Baxter, "you will be devils to yourselves, tempt yourselves when you have no others to tempt you, and make your solitude as dangerously provoking as company."*

Beware of tale-bearers, and do not suffer their reports to rouse your resentments.

"Be not inquisitive into the affairs of other men, nor the faults of thy servants, nor the mistakes of thy friends; lest thou go out to gather sticks to kindle a fire which shall burn thine own house."

Look at others who are addicted to passion, and see how unlovely they appear.

Commission some faithful and affectionate friend to watch over and admonish you.

But especially mortify pride and cultivate humility. "Only by pride cometh contention." "He that is of a proud heart, stirreth up strife." Passion is the daughter of pride, meekness the offspring of humility. Humility is the best cure for anger, sullenness, and revenge. He that thinks much of himself, will think much of every little offence committed against him; while he that thinks little of his own importance will think lightly of what is done to offend him. Every irritable, passionate, or revengeful person, is certainly a proud one, and should begin the cure of his passion

* Baxter's Catholic Directions; from which vast fund of practical theology, many of the particulars of this chapter are derived.

by the removal of his pride. But we need go no farther than the chapter before us, for an antidote to anger. Love is sufficient of itself; we must seek to have more of this heavenly virtue. Love cannot be either passionate or revengeful. Love is full of benevolence and good-will, and therefore cannot allow itself to indulge tempers unfriendly to the happiness of mankind. Let us seek to strengthen this parent principle, which will prevent the growth of whatever is evil, and promote the advancement of all that is excellent.

One caution may here be suggested for the encouragement of those who are particularly tried with an irritable temper, and that is, not to despond; if in the work of mortification you meet with many defeats, do not be in a passion with yourselves for being in a passion, for this will only increase the evil you are anxious to destroy. Go calmly, yet courageously, to the conflict; if victorious be not elated, if defeated be not disheartened. Often you will have to mourn your failures, and sometimes be ready to imagine that you are doomed to the hopeless task of Sisyphus, whose stone always rolled back again, when by immense labour he had urged it nearly to the summit of the hill. Do not expect an easy or a perfect conquest. Mourn your defeats, but do not despair. Many, after a few unsuccessful efforts, give up the cause, and abandon themselves to the tyranny of their passions. In this conflict, unsuccessful struggles are more honourable than unresisting submission.

3. Love will of course prevent revenge. Revenge is a term that a Christian should blot out from his vocabulary with his own penitential tears, or with the drops of his gratitude for the pardon he has received from

God. There is no passion more hostile to the genius of Christianity, or more frequently forbidden by its authority, than this; and there is none to which the depravity of human nature more powerfully excites us. The volume of history is stained, from the beginning to the end, with the blood which has been shed by the demon of revenge. Mankind, in every age and country, have groaned under the misery inflicted by this restless and cruel spirit, which no mischief can satisfy, no suffering appease. Revenge has converted men into wild beasts, and inspired them with a wish to tear each other to pieces. It is not likely that such a temper as this would meet with the least toleration or sanction in the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose person was an incarnation, and whose Gospel is an emanation, of love. Revenge is admitted by some as justifiable to a certain extent; by the reasoning and conduct of the world, the principle is allowed, indeed honoured, and condemned only in its most vicious excess. Wars, duels, railings, private animosities that do not infringe on the peace of society, are all justified on this ground. Mankind alter the golden rule, and do unto others not as they would that others should do, but as others do unto them in a way of evil; and this, so far from being blamed, is generally applauded as honourable and dignified. In the estimate of the people of the world, the man who refuses to resent an injury which he has received, is a poor mean-spirited creature, unworthy to associate with men of honour.

But whatever may be the maxims of the world, revenge is certainly forbidden by every page of the Word of God. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgres-

sion." Private revenge was certainly forbidden under the Old Testament, and still more explicitly under the New. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said our Lord, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." The same sentiments are enjoined by the apostles. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." These passages are decisive upon the point, that revenge in any form, or in any measure, is forbidden by the Christian religion.

The misfortune of many is, that they mistake the meaning of the term revenge, or rather they confine its application to the grosser, more mischievous, and more violent expressions of wrath: they think that nothing is revenge but cutting or maiming a man's person, openly slandering his reputation, or wantonly injuring his property. Such, it must be admitted, are fearful ebullitions of this destructive passion; but they are not

the only ways in which it expresses itself. There are a thousand petty acts of spite and ill-will, in which a revengeful spirit may operate. If we refuse to speak to another by whom we have been injured, and pass him with silent or manifest scorn; if we take delight in talking of his failings, and in lowering him in the opinion of others: if we show ill-will to his children or relations on his account; if we watch for an opportunity to perform some little act annoying to him, and feel gratified in the thought that we have given him trouble or pain; all this is done in a spirit of retaliation, and is as truly, though not so dreadfully, the acting of revenge, as if we preceeded to inflict bodily injury. The spirit of revenge simply means returning evil for evil, and taking pleasure in doing so. It may go to the extremes of calumny and murder, or may confine itself to the infliction of minor wrong; but if we in any way resent an injury with ill-will towards the person who committed it, this is revenge.

A question will here arise, whether according to this view we are not forbidden to defend our persons, our property, and our reputation, from the aggressions of lawless mischief? Certainly not. If an assassin attempt to maim or to murder me, I am allowed to resist the attack; for this is not revenging evil, but an effort to prevent it. If our character be aspersed, we must endeavour, by peaceful means, to obtain an apology and exculpation; and if this cannot be obtained, we are authorised to appeal to the law; for if calumny were not punished, society could not exist. If, however, instead of appealing to the law, we calumniate in return; if we inflict bodily injury on the aggressor, or take delight in injuring him in other ways, this is revenge:

but to seek the protection of the law, without at the same time indulging in malice, is self-defence, and the defence of society. If we are injured, or are likely to be injured, in our property, we must try, by all private and honourable means, to prevent the aggression; be willing to settle the affair by the mediation of wise and impartial men, and keep our minds free from anger, ill-will, and malice, towards the aggressors; and as a last resource, we are justifiable in submitting the cause, if it cannot be settled by any other means, to the decision of a court of justice. No Christian, however, should resort to the tribunal of public justice till every method of private adjustment has failed.

As it respects the propriety of Christians going to law with each other, the testimony of the apostle is decisive. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgment of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Men professing godliness, especially members of the same religious community, ought, in cases of difference

about property or character, to settle all their disputes by the mediation of their own brethren: and if either party decline such arbitration, he must be accountable for all the scandal thrown on the Christian profession by the legal measures to which the other may find it necessary to resort for the protection of his rights. In this case the guilt of infringing the apostolic regulation lies on him who refuses to accede to the Scriptural method of settling the differences that may arise among those who profess to be the disciples of Christ. Whatever award is made, in the case of private arbitration, both parties should abide by it; nor must the individual against whom the decision is given, feel any ill-will, or cherish any revenge towards his successful opponent.

The law of love requires that innumerable minor offences should be passed over without being noticed, or suffered to disturb our peace of mind. And those which we find it necessary to have explained, require the utmost caution and delicacy. In these cases, love will lead us to the offender in the spirit of meekness, to ask, not to demand, to solicit in the most gentle manner an explanation of the injurious treatment. In the great majority of cases, this line of conduct will stifle the animosity while it is yet a spark. If, on the contrary, we permit ourselves to take offence, and have our feelings wounded, or our anger roused; if, instead of mildly and affectionately expostulating, and seeking reconciliation, we brood over the injury, and retire in disgust, to indulge in sullenness, or to watch for an opportunity of revenge; this is being "easily provoked," and the very opposite of "suffering long."

CHAPTER VII.

THE KINDNESS OF LOVE.

Charity is kind.

It is a decisive proof and a striking display of the excellence of the Christian religion, that it enjoins not only the loftier and more rigid excellences of the human character, but those also which are delicately amiable and tender; not only the masculine virtues, but the feminine graces; in short, that it not only prepares its possessor to be a patriot on the great theatre of his country, or a spectacle of heroic martyrdom, to God, to angels, and to men, but a sympathizing friend in the social and domestic circles. Love can either expand its benevolence to the claims of the whole human family, or concentrate its emotions, for a time, in one individual object of pity or affection. "Love is kind." Kindness means a disposition to please, an anxiety, manifested by our conduct, to promote the comfort of our species. Pity commiserates their sorrows, mercy relieves their wants and mitigates their woes; but kindness is a general attention to their comfort. It is thus described and distinguished by a celebrated writer on English synonymes: "The terms affectionate and fond, characterize feelings: kind, is an epithet applied to outward

actions, as well as inward feelings; a disposition is affectionate or fond; a behaviour is kind. A person is affectionate, who has the object of his regard strongly in his mind, who participates in his pleasures and in his pains, and is pleased with his society. A person is kind, who expresses a tender sentiment, or does any service in a pleasant manner. Relatives should be affectionate to each other; we should be kind to all who stand in need of our kindness." Kindness, then, appears to be affectionate behaviour. This is what the apostle means when he admonishes us to "be kindly affectioned one to another."

Let us view the kind man in contrast with some other characters.

He is opposed to the rigid, severe, and censorious person, who will make no allowance for the infirmities or inexperience of others; but judges harshly, reproves sternly, and speaks severely, of all who do not come up to his standard. Kindness, on the contrary, makes all reasonable allowances; frames the best excuses it can, consistently with truth and holiness; speaks of the offender in a way of mitigation, and to him in a way of compassion; does not publish nor exaggerate his faults; and endeavours to find out some redeeming qualities to set off against his failings.

A kind man is opposed to a proud and overbearing one. The latter is ever seeking an opportunity to display his superiority, and make you feel your inferiority; and cares not how much your feelings are hurt by this offensive exhibition of his consequence. Kindness, if conscious, as it sometimes must be, of its superiority, takes care that those who are below it shall not feel a painful sense of their inferiority. Without removing

the distinctions of social life, or sacrificing its dignity, it will conceal as much as possible its pre-eminence, or unite it with such affability as shall render it by no means unpleasant.

Kindness is opposed to coldness and selfishness of disposition. There are persons who, though neither cruel nor injurious nor really hard-hearted, are yet so cold distant retiring and repulsive, that they can neither be approached nor moved. They look upon the scenes around them with the fixed and beamless eye, the chilliness and quiescence of the statue, for they have no interest in the concerns of the world. But kindness is the visible expression of a feeling and merciful heart; it is the going-forth of a tender and susceptible mind; it claims kindred with all the human race; it is all ear to listen, all heart to feel, all eye to examine and to weep, all hand and foot to relieve; it invites the sufferer with kind words, and sends him not empty away.

Kindness is opposed to a vain and ostentatious liberality. Some will be charitable if they may have spectators of their good deeds, who will go and proclaim their alms: thus the weaknesses of human nature often come in the place of duty, and supply the want of principle, though certainly without any advantage to their possessor. Such men spoil a charitable action by their mode of performing it: for in the most indelicate manner they make the object of their bounty feel a painful sense of obligation, and state the exact amount, almost in pecuniary value, of the favour they have conferred; and then go away and give such publicity to their doings, that the beneficiary is almost every where sure to hear of what has been done for him. Kindness will on the other hand conceal as much as possible that it is con-

ferring a favour; will do every thing to cause it to descend lightly upon the spirit of the recipient; and will, if circumstances allow, gladly extend relief from behind a veil, and do every thing to prevent the sense of obligation from being either painful or oppressive.

Kindness is opposed to the benevolence of partiality, prejudice, and caprice. There are not a few who are lavish in their fondness towards persons of their own party, or upon those who happen to be their favourites for the time; but have none of the charities of life for any beyond their own circle of partizans, or of their select friends; their benevolent regards are purely sectarian, or absolutely capricious. But kindness is a clear perennial spring, rising up from a heart replete with universal philanthropy, holding on its way, unimpeded by prejudices or partialities, and distributing its benefits alike upon all that it meets with in its course.

Having thus contrasted kindness with some characteristics to which it is opposed, let us now consider the manner in which it acts.

It expresses itself in words that are calculated to please. As not only our words but the tones of our voice are indicative of our thoughts and feelings, it is of consequence for us to be careful, both as to what we say, and how we say it. Half the quarrels which disturb the peace of society arise from unkind words, and not a few from unkind tones. We should sedulously avoid a sour morose chiding mode of speech, and adopt a soothing conciliatory and affectionate style of address. A surly tone is calculated to wound or offend; and love, which carries the law of kindness upon its lips, will consequently avoid it. A snappish petulant scolding address, is in the highest degree repulsive and dissonant

in the intercourse of society. We may not have, it is true, the music of sound in our speech, but it is our own fault if we have not the music of love. We need not employ grimace, fawning sycophancy, hollow and unmeaning compliment, but we may be courteous and affectionate; and we ought to "let our speech be seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Every word and every modulation of the voice that is likely to offend, should be studiously avoided, and will be avoided by kindness. It extends also to actions. It is anxious not to give offence by anything which it does; it is most delicately tender in reference to the feelings of its object, and would not unnecessarily crush the wing of an insect, much less inflict a wound on a rational mind. There are persons who, in a spirit of selfish independence, care not whom they please or whom they offend; but love is as anxious not to offend, as it is solicitous about its own gratification; its neighbour's comfort is as dear to it as its own: it calculates, deliberates, weighs the tendency of actions, and when by incaution or pure misfortune it has occasioned distress, it hastens by every practicable means to heal the wound.

Kindness not only abstains from actual injury, but it is active in conferring benefits, watches for an opportunity to please, is ever ready to afford its assistance when appealed to, and is not satisfied unless it can do something to increase the general stock of comfort. It accommodates itself to men's habits, partialities, or prejudices; adapts itself, in things indifferent and lawful, to their modes of acting, and does not wantonly oppose their predilections, when such resistance would

occasion them distress. A stiff uncomplying behaviour, which consults nothing but its own humour, and which will not, to give pleasure, sacrifice its own habits in the least particular, has not a particle of beneficence about it. Such an individual is like a person who will walk in a crowd with his arms stretched out, or with a dangerous weapon in his hand.

Kindness extends of course to little things, as well as to great ones. The happiness or misery of life does not consist so much in transports of joy, or paroxysms of anguish, as in feelings which, though less violent, are more frequent than those strong emotions. Hence it is in our power to make others miserable in life; not by deeds of cruelty or injustice, which we dare not or cannot commit, but by indulging in unaccommodating dispositions towards them; by vexing them with acts of unkindness, which will neither blast our reputation, nor put in peril our property liberty or life: and it is also in our power to make them happy, not so much by signal and material services, which are seldom called for at our hands, as by inferior offices of benevolence. The daily and almost hourly reciprocity of little acts of good or ill will, which we have an opportunity of performing, goes a great way to the making up of good or bad neighbourship. There are those who, in the greater expressions of Christian mercy, are really humane; whose benevolence at the same time has not learnt to stoop to little things; they are compassionate, but they want kindness; they would relieve a starving beggar, but they would not put themselves in ever so small a degree out of their way to accommodate in trivial matters a near neighbour.

Kindness is universal in its objects. We all know individuals who can never do enough for some objects of their regard, but they are by no means persons of diffusive kindness; and perhaps, if we examine, we shall find that their benevolence has a great mixture of selfishness in it, for it is exercised only towards those from whom they expect an ample return. It is the kindness of barter, not of charity: it is so much of their comfort put out at interest, not given away to the needy; they either have had, or expect to have, value received for all they do. But love is universal in its aspect; it is ever ready to do a kind office for any one that either solicits or needs its assistance. It has a kind look, word, and act, for everybody. Nor are its enemies denied the assistance of its efforts. Such is the generous spirit of the Christian religion, as appears from the passages quoted in a preceding chapter. Such is the refined, the sublime morality of the New Testament. Yes, these are the principles on which kindness acts: it extends its beneficence to the very man that has treated it with contumely and scorn, with cruelty, insult, and oppression. This is its duty and its inclination. In imitation of the dying Saviour, who gave his last prayer to his murderers, it says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Many will endure any hardship, make any exertion, bear any sacrifice for their friends, and can never do enough for them, who towards their enemies are unkind implacable and resentful; they can never forgive the man who has injured them; for him they have no kindness, but hold him in contempt aversion and neglect. But Christianity requires a higher and more disinterested virtue than this, for it commands us to be kind to our enemies.

What a fascinating character is the man of distinguished kindness! he is invested with indescribable loveliness: he may not have the glory in which the patriot, the hero, or the martyr is enshrined; but he is adorned in no common degree with the beauties of holiness. He carries about with him the majesty of goodness, if not the dominion of greatness. The light of his countenance is the warm sunshine, to which the sons of grief repair from their dark retreats, to bask in its glow; and his gentle words are like soft melody to chase away the evil thoughts from the bosom of melancholy, and to hush to peace the troubled reflections of the distempered mind. As he moves along in his career, distributing inexpensive but efficient expressions of his regard, it is amidst the blessing of those that were ready to perish, and the notes of the widow's heart, which he has turned to joy. When he comes unexpectedly into the company of his friends, every countenance puts on the appearance of complacency, and it appears as if a good genius had come among them to bless the party; as he looks round on the circle, with the smile of beneficence that has found an abiding place upon his brow, he presents the brightest resemblance to be found in our selfish world, of the entrance of the Saviour among his disciples when he said, "Peace be unto you!" and breathed upon them the Holy Ghost. Although he neither seeks nor wishes an equivalent in return for his many acts of benevolence, his gentle spirit receives back, in a full tide, the streams of consolation which have gone forth from his own heart to fill the empty channels of his neighbour's happiness. Who can be unkind to him, who is kind to all? What heart is so hard, what mind is so cruel,

what spirit is so diabolical, as to wound him, who never appears among his race but as a ministering angel? There is a magic in his tears to melt to sympathy the stubborn soul of cruelty itself; and no less a magic in his smiles, which relax and soften the hard features of envy, so that for a moment it reflects the sunshine of his joy. While he lives, every man is his admirer; and when he dies, every man is his mourner: while he is on earth, his name has a home in every heart; and when he is gone, he has a monument in every memory; and this is the description of his character, the record of his praise, Love is kind!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONTENTMENT OF LOVE.

Charity envieth not.

Envy is that passion which causes us to feel uneasiness at the sight of another's possessions or happiness, and makes us dislike him on that account. Of all the base passions, this is the basest. It is unmingled malignity, the very worst and bitterest dregs of human depravity, the most direct contrary of love. Envy is either general or special in its objects. It often exists in the mind to such an extent that its subjects seem almost instinctively opposed to excellence and to happiness, wherever they see them, or hear of them. They may not regard the individuals on whom their envious glance is fixed in the light of competitors or rivals; they may have nothing to hope from their depression, and nothing to fear from their elevation; but it is enough to awaken their uneasiness and dislike to know that they are in some respects their superiors. They cannot bear to see excellence or happiness in any one, or even to hear the language of commendation or praise. They would beggar the universe to enrich themselves, and monopolise all pleasure and all admiration; they would be alone in the world, as the sole possessors

of any thing valuable, and can endure neither a superior nor an equal. This, it must be allowed, is a maturity to which envy rarely attains, compared with its more special and limited operations.

It will be proper, before delineating at length the evil features and general deformity of this hideous passion, to state the more prevailing grounds and occasions of its exercise. It is a striking proof of its evil nature, that it is rarely indulged in reference to holiness or virtue. It scarcely ever happens that any-one is envied for superior moral excellence, as such: many are hated for their virtue; but envy, while it includes hatred, combines with it a desire to possess the thing which occasions the uneasiness. It may indeed indirectly covet the virtue of another, but it does so only on account of the esteem, influence, or delight which it procures, and not on account of that virtue itself; hence Satan, after his fall, is represented by our great bard as envying our first parents, not on the ground of their perfect rectitude, but of their happiness, and of their inheriting his lost honours. This horrid disposition is too satanic, too infernal, too far removed from all moral rectitude, to perceive the beauties of holiness, or to covet them on their own account. The real object and ground of envy appears to me to be either happiness or admiration, and all other things are regarded but as accessory to these; let any one be more happy or more generally noticed and esteemed by others than his neighbours, and he will be sure to be regarded with envy.

And what are the things which in general estimation procure for their possessors either pleasure or applause, and are therefore the occasions of envy?

Mental accomplishments, such as genius, learning, eloquence, science, courage, skill, or any of the arts which attract the notice of the world.

Personal charms. How frequently has symmetry of form or features, a gift which in value should be rated lower than any other which the hand of the Creator has bestowed upon us, been beheld with spiteful eyes, and been by some less adorned competitors for admiration, converted into an occasion of hatred and uneasiness.

Superiority in rank and fortune very commonly gives occasion to this detestable vice. Hence the ill-will which the poor often bear towards the rich, as engrossing to themselves all the comforts of life; and the evil eye with which persons of inferior station scrutinise those who are above them in rank.

Superior success in the pursuit of worldly objects of any kind is sure to excite the uneasiness and dislike of less fortunate rivals. Let a philosopher be more successful in the career of scientific discovery, a scholar in the path of literature, a warrior in the field of glory, a tradesman in the accumulation of wealth, and there will not be wanting those who will covet their rewards, and dislike them for their happier fortunes.

But while these are the general grounds of envy, there are some special objects to which it is commonly directed, such for instance as the following.

Persons who are nearly on our own level. Individuals who are either much above us in station, or much below us, are not so likely to excite uneasiness or dislike as those who are of our own standing in society. The tradesman envies not the nobleman, but some fellow-tradesman; the laurels and fame of the hero are not

envied by the common soldier, but by some officer of his own rank.

Those who, though much above us, occupy a station from which we have been cast down, are likely to be regarded by us with an evil eye, and to draw forth our dislike.

Those who have obtained an honour, place, or emolument for which we once contended, are almost sure to be envied by us; and also any particular single rival, who more than all others eclipses us, or is likely to do so.

It may not be amiss to specify here those who are most in danger of this sin.

The sorrowful. "Sorrow is selfish; it concentrates the affections upon our own interests. It may teach us to sympathise with others' griefs, but that others do grieve is something like consolation to the sorrowful; and those who would sympathise with others in their sorrows, and weep with those that weep, fall short of the higher attainment, to rejoice with those that rejoice. Sorrow cannot sympathise with happiness, and therefore heaven cannot admit of it, for envy would enter with it. Happiness will not only be the fruit of holiness in another world, but the perfection of it, since it is that native seat in which alone the soul attains the full development of its affections so as to take part, without a jarring fibre, in the universal harmony."* Let the sorrowful, be the occasion of their sorrows what it might, be much upon their guard, for they are pre-eminently in danger of envying those to whom Providence has granted a happier lot than to themselves.

Persons descending in life, and suffering under pain-

* Eclectic Review.

ful reverses which have reduced them from comparative affluence and publicity, to obscurity and poverty, are exposed to the temptation of looking with ill-will and distress upon the prosperous and happy. Misfortune, where it is not sanctified by the grace of God, is very apt to produce a misanthropic disposition, and to generate envy in the bosom of its wretched subjects. Hard indeed is it, as we sink into the shade, to see with other feelings than those of uneasiness and dislike, the elevation of more favoured individuals who rise into sunshine.

Candidates for popular applause are oftener than all others the subjects of this base passion. Could the veil that hides the mystery of authorship, especially in the departments of criticism and controversy, be drawn aside; and could the workings of those distinguished minds which are continually active, not only for the amusement, but professedly for the instruction of the public, be disclosed, how much of this form of human depravity would be detected! How much of hatred, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, is sometimes to be found in the poet, the man of imagination, the wings of whose genius, if we would hearken to him, have borne him aloft above the low regions of earth-born cares; or in the philosopher, the man of abstraction, whose powerful and penetrating intellect, proud of its own rich resources, and high communings, has either left him without a rival, or made him, according to his own profession, glad that a luckier eye than his own has seen a vision of truth which he saw not. Envy is the orator's and the author's besetting sin. "Vanity, or a thirst after applause, is the most unsocial and envious of the passions, avarice itself not excepted. The reason

is plain. Property is a kind of good, which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivision, than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led by an attention to their own interest, to promote the welfare of each other; their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself, he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures, to devote to the admiration of each other, is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes: for though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, regarding his competitor as his rival, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and to repine at his success."*

The prosperous, those who have gained nearly all they seek, are apt to feel peculiar ill-will to any who may be just above them, and stand between them and the summit of their desires. That one man who keeps us from the highest rank, the chief place, is more likely to be hated, than all else who have injured us or can do so. How insatiable is evil desire, how craving after more, amidst all its stores. Human nature is never satisfied with earthly good. I believe that many who have vast possessions are inconceivably more miserable, and more full of hatred, than others who have scarcely anything.

On the other hand, there is not any kind of superio-

* See Mr Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity.

rity, however low its nature or obscure its situation, which is not found to be sufficient to call forth the ill-will and hatred of some inferior or disappointed spectator. Children and rustics, as well as philosophers, warriors, and princes, are subject to its influence. Like the venomous spider, it weaves its web, and inflicts its deadly sting, in the cottages of poverty, the mansions of affluence, and the halls of science. It is the epidemic of the human race, the most common operation of human depravity. The apostle seems to give it as a general description of human nature, while unrenewed by divine grace, "Living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The whole Gentile world, before the coming of Christ, is described as having been "full of envy." "Envyings," bear a high place among the works of the flesh; there was no one evil of which the prohibition was more frequent or more earnestly enjoined on the converts from paganism among the churches of believers than this: and the apostle James tells us, that it is still partially inherent in every man, "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy."

This execrable disposition very often exists, where, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, it is not at all suspected. Sometimes it is felt in reference to an individual whom we have been accustomed to consider an inferior, and worthy only of ridicule and contempt. But that very contempt and ridicule is often an operation of envy: our eye has discovered, almost without our being conscious of the fact, some fancied or real superiority, and in order to dispute or conceal it, we have determined to treat him as only worthy of our contumely and scorn. Our laughter is intended to hide the misery which lurks in our bosom, and to disparage or

destroy in our own and others' estimation, the excellence or happiness which produces it. Envy, like the Devil its parent, has a laugh as well as a frown at its command.

Envy is often found in persons who are in general accounted very amiable, and really are so, in most things. Persons the very opposite of such characters as Cain, Saul, and Ahab, persons who have not only much suavity of discourse, but much kindliness of disposition, are not free from the workings of this disposition in secret, and are sometimes guilty of such exhibitions of it as fall like a dark shadow upon their many and distinguished virtues. It is, I lament to say, to borrow the true and just sarcasm of a writer already quoted, "a most reputable and orthodox vice, a regular church-going sin, one which often dresses like virtue and talks like her. Envy has a great zeal for religion, a keen sense of public justice, and is much shocked at the inconsistencies of good people. It exults when a hypocrite is unmasked, and says, 'I always suspected him.' It is also most benevolent, and when wholesome adversity overtakes a brother, prays that it may be the means of promoting his humility and other Christian graces." Ah! how much of it is there indeed, even in the church of God. How much of that censoriousness and detraction which is indulged under the pretence of bewailing the follies of others, is to be traced up to this evil source! How often is a little infirmity pitched upon and deplored, with no other motive than to discredit and disparage the sterling excellence with which it happens to be associated: the speck is pointed at and magnified, perhaps with a look of sorrow, and a tone

of lamentation, but only to draw off public attention from the lustre which is admired and envied. Envy has a thousand devices to practise against its object, under the the veil of seeming respect.

Is there any sin to which even the ministers of the gospel are more exposed than this? Is there any one which they more frequently commit? How much grace does it require in any man to see without envy the popularity, and hear of the usefulness of others, and to find himself overlooked and forgotten. Perhaps the men applauded are his juniors in age, and his inferiors in literature, taste, and science; and yet while he lies becalmed, they are swept along their course with full gales of popular applause. How few, even of those whose business it is to preach contentment, humility, and love, can with sincerity say, "I am quite satisfied that the honour should be denied to me, and rest upon the brows of others. I am prepared to say without a murmur, he must increase, but I must decrease." This is indeed the virtue of heaven, to see others occupying a higher sphere than ourselves, more caressed, more admired, and more followed, and feel neither uneasiness in our own bosom nor any thing of ill-will toward them. It is virtue rarely found on earth; for on the contrary what distress and dislike are produced on some minds, by the talents and the success of those of their brethren, who are but such a little way before them, as to be, though before them, still in the same class. Are there no arts of detraction employed, to diminish, if not their popularity, yet their claims to the coveted palm? No insinuations against their motives? No searching for vices of style, errors of taste, defects of genius? O!

when shall envy, child of hell, be driven from the church of God? When shall it no longer creep in the pew, or soar in the pulpit?

Baxter has some very striking remarks on this subject. "O that ever it should be spoken of godly ministers, that they are so set upon popular airs, and of sitting high in men's estimation, that they envy the parts and names of their brethren that are preferred before them, as if all were taken from their praises that are given to another's; and as if God had given them their gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their persons, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world, and all his gifts in others were trodden down and vilified, if they seem to stand in the way of their honour! What, a saint, a preacher for Christ, and yet envy that which hath the image of Christ, and malign his gifts for which he should have the glory, and all because they seem to hinder our glory? Is not every true Christian a member of the body, and therefore partaketh the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And doth not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts, not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot hath the benefit of the guidance of the eye, but also because his own ends may be obtained by his brethren's gifts as well as by his own? For if the glory of God and the church's felicity be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another because he helpeth him to do his master's work? Yet, alas, how common is this heinous crime amidst men of parts and eminency in the church! They can secretly blot the reputation of such as stand cross to their own: and what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they

be proved palpable liars and slanderers, they will do in generals and malicious intentions, raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And so far are some gone in this satanical vice, that it is their common practice, and a considerable part of their business, to keep down the estimation of those they dislike, and defame others in the slyest and most plausible way; and some go so far that they are unwilling that any that are abler than themselves should come into their pulpits, lest they should be applauded above themselves. A fearful thing, that any man who hath the least of the fear of God, should so envy at God's gifts, and had rather that his carnal hearers were unconverted, and the drowsy not awakened, than that it should be done by another, who may be preferred before them. Yea, so far does this cursed vice prevail, that in great congregations, that have need of the help of many teachers, we can scarcely get two in equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God! But unless one of them be quite below the other in parts, and content to be so esteemed, or unless one be a curate to the other, and ruled by him, they are contending for precedency, and envying each other's interest, and walking with strangeness and jealousy towards each other, to the shame of the profession, and the great wrong of the congregation. I am ashamed to think of it, that when I have been endeavouring with persons of public interest and capacity to further a good work, to convince them of the necessity of more ministers than one in great congregations, they tell me they will never agree together. I hope the objection is ungrounded as to the most; but it is a sad case that it should be so with any. Nay, some men

are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an equal assistant to further the work of God, they had rather take all the burden upon themselves, though more than they can bear, than that any should share with them in the honour; and for fear lest they should diminish their interest with the people.

"I confess I have often wondered that this most heinous sin should be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when far lesser sins are by ourselves proclaimed to be so damnable in our people.

"Brethren, I know this is a sad and harsh confession! But that all this should be so amongst us, is more grievous, and should be so to us, than to be told of it. Could this nakedness be hid, I should not have disclosed it, at least so openly in the view of all. But, alas, it is long ago open to the eye of the world: we have dishonoured ourselves by idolizing our honour, we print our shame, and preach our shame, and tell it unto all."*

And are not religious bodies sometimes guilty of this sin? Has it no existence in the breasts of professing Christians of different denominations? Is there no envy in Dissenters towards the Church of England, or of the Church of England towards Dissenters? Of Baptists towards Pædobaptists, Pædobaptists towards Baptists? Of Methodists towards Congregationalists, and Congregationalists towards Methodists? What means that disposition to suspect and traduce each other, which is but too common amongst all the divisions of the Christian church? If one denomination prospers, are not all the rest too apt to look on with

* The Reformed Pastor.

envious eyes, because theirs are likely to be eclipsed or diminished? Are not all the little arts of detraction most busily employed, and a hundred tongues made voluble to arrest the progress and limit the prosperity of the rising sect? And how much of this spirit is often seen in the conduct of congregations of the same denomination! What ill-will is often cherished by the members of a declining church towards those of a prosperous one, only because they are prosperous! They can never hear of the success of their neighbour society, their sister church, without feeling and appearing uneasy and displeased, as if an injury were done to them; they profess to be incredulous of the fact; they suggest that it is more in outward show, than reality; they do not scruple to mention drawbacks in the talents, or perhaps the inconsistencies, of the minister; detraction, even slander, is employed against some of the members of the prosperous society, as it is sneeringly called. Such, even in Christian churches, or rather in the minds of some of their members, are the operations of envy.

Nor is its influence excluded from Religious Institutions. There is no sanctuary so sacred, which this diabolical passion will not violate: no asylum consecrated to piety or humanity, into which it will not intrude. Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, with other kindred institutions, are not secure against its entrance, operation and mischief; yea the more elevated and the more holy the ground, the more ambitious is envy to occupy it. Born in heaven, though soon cast down to hell, it would ascend again to heaven if it could. It is a vice, which while it spurns not the lowest place on earth, nor scorns the meanest bosom

amongst men, is ambitious to approach as nearly as possible to the celestial temple, the doors of which it would if possible force open, and agitate and poison the mind of the second seraph in glory with ill-will towards the first, and make him hate the eternal God, because he, his creature, could not be higher than the Highest. Let one man, let a body of men, be conspicuous for their deeds of charity and zeal in the cause of the Lord; let their doings go forth to the ends of the world, and their praises be sounded through the church of the living God; and Satan, alarmed at their past success and at their prospective victories, will soon find some bosoms which he will occupy with his own craft and his own envy, and from which he will go forth with all deceivableness, to maintain a factious and noisy opposition. And how has the use of sacred terms and holy rules been perverted in this work of professed reformation; for the stormy zeal to seek the glory, and to accomplish the purposes of the Lord, was in fact nothing but the operation of that envy, which to the malignity, adds the subtlety of the old serpent.

Envy, with all its will and its power to do mischief, is not only a deceitful but a dastardly vice: while there is no being in our world so lofty that it will not attack; no place so strongly fortified that it will not assail; no enterprise so bold that it will not project; it is at the same time ashamed and afraid to be seen as it really is. Pride, revenge, drunkenness, gluttony, and many other vices, avow with an audacious boldness their names, places of abode, and purposes; they borrow no mark, and put on no cloak of disguise; much less do they clothe themselves in the robe of righteousness, and talk the language of a saint; but envy does all this, con-

scious that it is an unnatural disposition, unsuitable to the human constitution, and partaking more of the rancour of a devil than of the temper of a man; that it is universally odious, branded by the common consent of mankind with a stigma deep and foul; it disclaims its name, conceals its nature, makes its professor deny its abode in his breast, and compels him to call it "a sense of equity," "a power of discrimination," "a concern for the public weal," "an enemy to ostentation," and to such lengths do its falsehood and impiety go, it professes in some cases to be "a zeal for the glory of God."

But let us now contemplate its hateful nature. It is a vice of the utmost deformity and heinousness. To feel uneasiness at another's happiness or excellence, and to dislike him on that account, is a sin that needs no analysis to prove its deadly nature, no dissection to expose its corruption; it presents, to the most superficial observer, a frightful and disgusting appearance. It stands directly opposed to the nature of God, whose love delights in excellence and in happiness, and whose grace produces both; and by whom this sin must be regarded with infinite loathing and abhorrence. It is a secret murmuring against the appointments of heaven, an incessant quarrel with Providence, an accusation preferred against the wisdom, equity, and goodness of the divine administration. As it is unlike God, so it is the image of Satan, being the disposition, which, united with pride, cast down the apostate angels from their seats in heaven, and fills and fires their bosoms in the bottomless pit; it is the temper of hell, and the passion of devils, who despair for themselves, and envy the happiness of men and angels, yet cannot rejoice

either in the good or the evil they witness, although they endeavour to hinder the good and promote the evil, with all the restlessness of malice, and the devices of superhuman craft. It is a parent crime, and its progeny are as mischievous and deformed as itself: for malice, hatred, falsehood, slander, are its ordinary brood; and not unfrequently murder: as when carried to excess, there is scarcely an injury within its reach which it would not inflict upon its object. It cannot even offer for itself the excuses which many vices sometimes bring forward: anger pleads the provocation it has received; but envy has received no offence, except the well-being of another be an insult: lust and intemperance plead the gratification which their objects yield, and robbery holds up its gain; but envy gains nothing but misery, and converts the happiness of which it is the witness into wormwood and gall of its own cup, and transvenoms the honey of another man's comfort into the poison of asps for its own bosom: it is a source of eternal vexation, an instrument of self-torment, a rottenness in the bones, a burning ulceration of the soul, a crime, which partaking of the guilt, partakes as largely of the misery of hell.*

Such is envy; but who can describe it accurately, or do it justice? If we look for it as embodied in living characters, we shall find it in Cain, the proto-murderer, who slew his brother at the instigation of this vice. We shall find it in the dark, gloomy, and revengeful spirit of Saul, who, under the influence of envy, plotted for years the slaughter of David. We shall find it in the king of Israel, when he pined for the vineyard of Naboth, and shed his blood to gain it. Yea, it was

* See Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

envy that perpetrated the most atrocious crime ever planned in hell, or executed on earth, on which the sun refused to look, and at which nature gave signs of abhorrence by rending the rocks; I mean the crucifixion of Christ: for the evangelist tells us, that for envy the Jews delivered our Lord.

Bishop Hall has given us a very striking portraiture of the envious man, which I shall here introduce: "He feeds on others' evils, and hath no disease but his neighbour's welfare: whatsoever God does for him, he cannot be happy with company: and if he were put to choose whether he would rather have equals in a common felicity, or superiors in misery, he would demur upon the election. His eye casts out too much, and never returns home but to make comparisons with another's good. He is an ill-prizer of foreign commodity, worse of his own; for that he rates too high, this undervalues. You shall have him ever inquiring into the estates of his equals and betters, wherein he is not more desirous to hear all, than loth to hear any thing over good: and if just report relates aught better than he would, he redoubles the question, as being hard to believe what he likes not; and hopes yet, if that be averred again to his grief, that there is something concealed in the relation, which if it were known would argue the commended party miserable, and blemish him with secret shame. He is ready to quarrel with God because the next field is fairer grown; and angrily calculates his cost, and time, and tillage. Whom he dares not openly backbite nor wound with a direct censure, he strikes smoothly with an over-cold praise; and when he sees that he must either maliciously oppugn the just praise of another (which were unsafe), or approve it by assent, he yieldeth;

but shows withal that his means were such, both by nature and education, that he could not, without much neglect, be less commendable: so his happiness shall be made the colour of detraction. When a wholesome law is propounded, he crosseth it either by open or close opposition, not for any incommodity or inexperience, but because it proceedeth from any mouth than his own; and it must be a case rarely plausible that will not admit some probable contradiction. When his equal should rise to honour, he striveth against it unseen, and rather with much cost suborneth great adversaries: and when he sees his resistance vain, he can give a hollow gratulation in pretence: but in secret disparageth that advancement: either the man is unfit for the place, or the place for the man; or if fit, yet less gainful or more common than opinion: whereto he adds, that himself might have had the same dignity upon better terms and refused it. He is witty in devising suggestions to bring his rival out of love into suspicion: if he be courteous, he is seditiously popular; if bountiful, he binds over his clients to faction; if successful in war, he is dangerous in peace; if wealthy, he lays up for a day; if powerful, nothing wants but opportunity for rebellion; his submission is ambitious hypocrisy; his religion, politic insinuation: no action is safe from an envious construction. When he receives a good report of him whom he emulates, he saith, fame is partial, and covers mischiefs; and pleases himself to find it false: and if ill-will hath dispersed a more spiteful narration, he lays hold on that against all witnesses, and broacheth that rumour for truth, because worst; and when he sees him perfectly miserable, he can at once pity him and rejoice. What himself cannot do,

others shall not: he hath gained well, if he hath hindered the success of what he would have done and could not. He conceals his best skill, not so as it may not be known that he knows it, but so as it may not be learned, because he would have the world miss him. He attained to a sovereign medicine by the secret legacy of a dying empiric, whereof he will leave no heir, lest the praise should be divided. Finally, he is an enemy to God's favours, if they fall beside himself: the best nurse of ill-fame: a man of the worst diet, for he consumes himself, and delights in pining: a thorn-hedge covered with nettles: a peevish interpreter of good things: and no other than a lean and pale carcass, quickened with a fiend."

How hateful, then, is this crime; and although we may not be in danger of carrying it to the excess here stated, yet we should ever strive against its least and lowest degrees. The means of opposing and mortifying it are many.

Let us very seriously meditate on its evil nature. A steady contemplation of its deformity and demon-like countenance is calculated to excite disgust, and to produce abhorrence. Many evils, and this among the number, are too much indulged, because they are too little contemplated. The more we meditate upon the heinousness of envy, the more we shall be convinced of the utter unsuitableness of such a temper as this is to be the inmate of a Christian's bosom: it is like a fiend inhabiting the temple of the Lord. We must next form a deliberate resolution for its mortification; we must stand prepared to take the greatest pains, to maintain the most determined efforts, for the riddance of our hearts from so hateful a disposition. Let us next

consider, that the circumstances which excite our envy are among the arrangements of a wise Providence; and that to dislike another on account of his excellence or happiness, is a crime of no less magnitude than a wish to oppose and subvert the dispensations of heaven. Let us remember, that if others have more than ourselves, we have infinitely more than we deserve; a deliberate and frequent consideration of our numerous and aggravated sins, with our deliverance from their consequences, together with a survey of our mercies and hopes as Christians, would very powerfully help us in the great business of mortifying envy; for the chief difference between man and man, as to real happiness, lies in spiritual distinctions; and if we have these, the absence of any thing else is matter of little consequence. It may not be amiss also to consider how comparatively small is the amount of happiness derived by the object of our envy, from those possessions on the ground of which we dislike him: and how soon, could we transfer them to ourselves, they would cease to impart any strong gratification to us. We always act under a delusion, when we indulge this hateful passion: its objects are seen through a magnifying medium of very high power. The circumstances which excite our envy have their attendant evils; evils which, though concealed from general observation, are well known to the possessor of them. We should labour to be content with such things as we have: contentment is the secret of happiness, whether we have much or little. The man who makes up his mind to enjoy what he has, is quite as happy as he who is possessed of twice as much.

But still the great thing is, to endeavour, by God's

gracious help, to increase in love. Our envy will then as certainly diminish as darkness retires before the entrance of light, or cold before the power of heat. Love and envy are the very antipodes of each other; the former delights in the happiness of others, the latter is made miserable by it. Let us endeavour to cultivate this disposition, and to delight in witnessing and diffusing blessedness. This is what the apostle meant when he said, "Rejoice with those that do rejoice." What a beatifying, and even sublime temper is that which leads its possessor to find consolation amidst his own straits privations and difficulties, in contemplating the possessions and the comforts of those around him! What relief would such elevated virtue bring to the mourner, when he could turn his own darkened orb toward the illumination of his neighbour's prosperity! Happy the man who can thus borrow the joys of others, when he has none or few of his own; and, from the wilderness of his own situation, enjoy a beautiful prospect in his friend's domain. Difficult and rare as such a temper is, it is that which is the subject of the apostle's description in the chapter we are considering, and which it is the duty of every Christian to cultivate. Hard, indeed, is the saying, and few there are who can bear it; but it is assuredly the lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, and which those disciples must all endeavour to learn. Much may be done by effort. Let us determine, by God's help, to acquire it; let us make the attempt, and let us only persevere, notwithstanding many defeats and many discouragements, and it is astonishing what may be done. But this kind goes not forth but by fasting and prayer. Love cannot be culti-

vated, nor envy destroyed in our hearts, except by the power of the Holy Spirit. We may as well try by our own strength to pull up by the roots the oak of a century's growth, or overturn a mountain, as to eradicate the vice of envy from our hearts, without the aid of God's own Spirit: that aid is promised to fervent and persevering prayer, and if we have it not, the fault is our own.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HUMILITY OF LOVE.

Charity is not puffed up, vaunteth not itself.

The apostle's meaning, in this part of his description, evidently is, that love has not a high and overweening conceit of its own possessions and acquirements, and does not ostentatiously boast of what it is, or has done, can do, or intends to do. It is opposed to pride and vanity, and is connected with true humility.

Pride signifies such an exalted idea of ourselves as leads to self-esteem, and to contempt of others: it is self-admiration. It differs from vanity thus: pride causes us to value ourselves; vanity makes us anxious for applause. Pride renders a man odious; vanity makes him ridiculous. Love is equally opposed to both.

Pride is the sin which laid the moral universe in ruins. It was this that impelled Satan and his confederates to mad "defiance of the Omnipotent in arms," for which they were driven from heaven, and taught by their bitter experience, that "God resisteth the proud." Banished from the world of celestials, pride alighted on our globe, in its way to hell, and brought destruction in its train. Propagated from our common and fallen parent with our species, it is the original sin, the inherent

corruption, of our nature. It spreads over humanity with the contagious violence, the loathsome appearance, of a mental leprosy, raging alike through the palace and the cottage, and infecting equally the prince and the peasant.

The grounds of pride are various: whatever constitutes a distinction between man and man, is the occasion of this hateful disposition. It is a vice that does not dwell exclusively in kings' houses, wear only soft raiment, and feed every day upon titles, fame, or affluence: it accommodates itself to our circumstances, and adapts itself to our distinctions, of whatever kind they be. The usual grounds of pride are the following.

Wealth. Some value themselves on account of their fortune, look down with contempt on those below them, and exact obsequiousness towards themselves, and deference for their opinions, according to the money or the acres which they possess.

Others are proud of their talents, either natural or acquired. The brilliancy of their genius, the extent of their learning, the splendour of their imagination, the acuteness of their understanding, their power to argue or declaim, form the subjects of their self-esteem, and reasons for their pouring their disdain upon all who are inferior to them in mental endowments. But these things are not so common in the church of God as those which I shall now mention.

Ecclesiastical connexions form, in many cases, the occasion of pride. This was exemplified in the Jews, who boasted that they were the children of Abraham, and worshipped in the temple of the Lord. Their self-admiration, as the members of the only true church, and as the covenant people of God, was insufferably

disgusting. In this feature of their character, they are too often imitated in modern times. While some boast of belonging to the church as by law established, and look with contempt on all who range themselves on the side of dissent, too many of the latter throw back the scorn upon their opponents, and pride themselves on the greater purity of their ecclesiastical order. There is the pride of the dominant party, and also that of the seceding one: the pride of belonging to the church, which includes the court, the senate, the universities; and that which is sometimes felt in opposing this array of royalty, and learning, and law: the pride of thinking with the king, and the nobles, and the judges, and the prelates; and also that of thinking against them. Whatever leads us to think highly of ourselves in matters of religion, and to despise others, whether it be the distinctions of earthly greatness, the practice of religious duties, or the independence of our mode of thinking, is opposed to the spirit of Christian charity.

Superior light on the subject of revealed truth is no unusual occasion of pride. The Arminian pharisee dwells with fondness on the goodness of his heart; the Antinomian, with equal haughtiness, values himself on the clearness of his head; while not a few moderate Calvinists regard with complacency their sagacity in discovering the happy way; and the Socinian, as far from humility as either of them, is inflated with a conceit of the strength of his reason, and its elevation above vulgar prejudices. As men are more proud of their understanding than of their disposition, it is very probable that religious opinions are more frequently the cause of conceit and self-importance, than any thing else which can be mentioned. "It is knowledge,"

says the apostle, "that puffeth up." "We are the men, and wisdom will die with us," is the assumption of multitudes.

Religious gifts are sometimes the ground of self-admiration. Fluency and fervour in extempore prayer, ability to converse on doctrinal subjects, especially when accompanied by a ready utterance in public, have all, through the influence of Satan and the depravity of our nature, led to the disposition we are now condemning. None are in more danger of this than the ministers of religion: it is the besetting sin of their office. There is no one gift which offers so strong a temptation both to vanity and to pride, as that of public speaking. If the orator really excel and is successful, he is the immediate spectator of his success, and has not even to wait till he has finished his discourse; for although the decorum of public worship will not allow of audible tokens of applause, it does of visible ones: the look of interest, the tear of penitence or of sympathy, the smile of joy, the deep impression on the mind, the death-like stillness, cannot be concealed; all seem like a tribute of admiration to the presiding spirit of the scene; and the applause which is conveyed to his ear, after all the silent plaudits which have reached his eye, is equally calculated to puff him up with pride. No men are more in danger of this sin than the ministers of the gospel; none should watch more sleeplessly against it.

Deep religious experience has often been followed by the same effect, in those cases where it has been remarkably enjoyed. The methods of divine grace, though marked by a uniformity sufficient to preserve that likeness of character which is essential to the unity of the

spirit and the sympathies of the church, are still distinguished by a vast variety of minor peculiarities. The convictions of sin in some minds are deeper, the apprehensions of divine wrath are more appalling, the transition from the poignant compunction of repentance, bordering on despair, to joy and peace in believing, more slow and more awful, the subsequent repose more settled, and the joy less mingled with the gloom of distressing fears, than is experienced by the generality of their brethren. Such persons are looked up to as professors of religion whose religious history has been remarkable, as vessels of mercy on which the hand of the Lord has bestowed peculiar pains, and which are eminently fitted for the master's use. They are regarded as having a peculiar sanctity about them, and hence they are in danger of falling under the temptation to which they are exposed, and of being proud of their experience. They look down from what they suppose to be their lofty elevation, if not with disdain, yet with suspicion or pity upon those whose way has not been in their track. Their seasons of elevated communion with God, of holy enlargement of soul, are sometimes followed by this tendency. Paul was never more in danger of losing his humility, than when he was just returned from gazing upon the celestial throne.

Zeal, felt in the cause either of humanity or of piety, has frequently produced pride. This was strikingly illustrated in the case of the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee," said the inflated devotee, "that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess!" Where a natural

liberality of mind, or religious principle, has led men to lavish their property, or their time, upon benevolent institutions, they have too often returned from the scene of public activity, to indulge in private and personal admiration. They have read with peculiar delight the reports in which their munificence is recorded, and have assigned to themselves a high place in the roll of public benefactors.

On all these grounds pride exalts itself; but love is no less opposed to vanity than it is to pride, "it vaunteth not itself." It does not boast of, or ostentatiously display, its possessions, acquirements, or operations. A disposition to boast, and to attract attention, is a common foible. We see this among the people of the world, in reference to their property, their learning, their connections, their influence. They are afraid the public should under-rate them; forgetting that they pay a poor compliment to their importance, when they thus think it necessary to proclaim it in order to its being known. If, indeed, they are what they wish to make us believe they are, the fact would be obvious, without this method of publishing it in every company. Puffing is always suspicious or superfluous; for real greatness no more needs a crier than the sun.

But it is more particularly in reference to religious matters that this observation of the apostle applies. We should not appear eager to display our gifts, nor should we vaunt of our religious experience. The manner in which some good but weak people talk of their pious conflicts, is indeed intolerably offensive. No matter who is present, pious or profane, scorner or believer, they parade all their seasons of despondency or of rapture; they tell you how they struggled with

the great enemy of souls, and overcame him; how they wrestled with God, and had power to prevail; and that you may have as exalted an opinion of their humility, as of their enjoyment, they tell you, in the utter violation of all propriety, and almost of decency, what temptations they have encountered, what hair-breadth escapes they have had from the commission of sin. Their motive is obvious; all this vaunting is to impress you with the idea, that they are no ordinary Christians. Who can wonder that all religious conversation should be branded as whining cant and disgusting hypocrisy, when the injudicious and nauseating effusions of such talkers are regarded as a fair sample of it?

Too common is it to make the externals of religion the subject of vain-glorious boasting. You cannot be long in the company of some Christians without hearing of their splendid place of worship, and its vast superiority over all others in the town. They establish the most insulting and degrading comparisons between their minister and his brethren in the neighbourhood; none so eloquent, none so able, none so successful, as he. Notwithstanding your attachment to the pastor whose ministry you attend with pleasure and profit, you may be condemned to hear him dishonoured and degraded by one of these gasconading professors, proving himself as destitute of good manners as he is of good feeling.

And what a propensity is there in the present age, to display, parade, and boasting, in reference to religious zeal! This is one of the temptations of the day in which we live; and a compliance with the temptation, one of its vices. We have at length arrived at an era of the Christian church, when all the denominations

into which it is divided, and all the congregations into which it is subdivided, have their public religious institutions for the diffusion of divine truth. These institutions cannot be supported without money: and the money that is contributed for their support must be matter of general notoriety. Like the tributary streams flowing into a great river, or like great rivers flowing into the sea, the contributions of associated congregations or communities, make up the general fund; but unlike the tributary streams which flow silently to form the mighty mass of waters, without requiring the ocean to publish to the universe the amount of each separate quota, the offerings of the different religious bodies must be announced before the world to the uttermost farthing. It perhaps is necessary that the contributors should know that their bounty has not been stopped or swallowed up in its course, but has reached its intended channel: and such is the weakness of our principles, and the strength of our imperfections, that this publicity, to a certain extent, seems necessary to stimulate our languid zeal. But it has given opportunity, and that opportunity has been eagerly embraced, to establish a system of unhallowed rivalry between the different denominations and the several congregations into which the Christian church is divided. Who can have heard the speeches, read the reports, or been informed of the proceedings of many public meetings for the support of missionary societies, without being grieved at the strange fire and contaminated offerings which were then brought to the altar of the Lord? The object of the meetings was good, for it was the destruction of an idolatry as insulting to Jehovah as that which Jehu destroyed: but like

the king of Israel, hundreds of voices exclaimed in concert, "Come, see our zeal for the Lord!" The image of jealousy was lifted up in the temple of Jehovah: adulatory speakers chanted its praises in compliments to the liberality of the worshippers: the multitude responded in shouts of applause to the tribute paid to their zeal: the praise of God was drowned amidst the praise of men: and the crowd dispersed, in love with the cause, it is true, but more for their own sakes than for the sake of God or of the heathen world.

Difficult indeed it is, with such hearts as ours, to do any thing entirely pure from all admixture of sin; but when we take pains to make our zeal known; when we employ effort to draw public attention upon us; when we wish and design to make ourselves talked of, as a most extraordinarily liberal and active people; when we listen for praises, and are disappointed if they do not come in the measure we expected, and feast upon them if they are presented; when we look with envy on those who have outstripped us, and we find no pleasure in our efforts, because we cannot be first; when we look with jealousy on those who are approaching our level, and feel a new stimulus, not from a fresh perception of the excellence of the object, but from a fear that we shall be eclipsed in public estimation; when we talk of our fellow-workers, or to them, with disdain of their efforts, and with arrogant ostentation of our own; then indeed have we employed the cause only as a pedestal on which to exalt ourselves: in pulling down one kind of idolatry, we have set up another, and rendered our contributions nothing better than a costly sacrifice to our own vanity. All this is a want of that Christian love which "vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up."

True zeal is modest and retiring: it is not like the scentless sunflower, which spreads its gaudy petals to the light of heaven, and turns its face to the orb of day through his course, as if determined to be seen; but like the modest violet, it hides itself in the bank, and sends forth its fragrance from deep retirement. It employs no trumpeter, it unfurls no banner, as the hypocrite does; but while conferring the most substantial benefits, it would, if it were possible, be like the angels, who while ministering to the heirs of salvation, are unseen and unknown by the objects of their benevolent attention.

Observe the manner in which love operates to the destruction of this evil. Love, as I have already had frequent occasion to remark, is a desire to promote the happiness of those around us; but proud or vain persons tend materially to impair it. They generally excite disgust, frequently offer insult, and sometimes inflict pain. Their object is to impress you with a degrading sense of inferiority, and thus to wound and mortify your feelings; caring little for other persons' peace, they pursue a career of contumely and scorn, dreaded by the weak, and despised by the wise. It is impossible to be happy in their society; for if you oppose them, you are insulted; if you submit to them, you are degraded.

Love is essentially and unalterably attended with humility; humility is the garment with which it is clothed, its inseparable and invariable costume. By humility, I do not intend the servility which crouches, the meanness which creeps, or the sycophancy which fawns; but a disposition to think lowly of our own attainments, a tendency to dwell upon our defects rather than

our excellences, an apprehension of our inferiority compared with those around us, with what we ought to be, and what we might be. It is always attended with that modest deportment, which neither boasts of itself, nor seeks to depreciate any one else: humility is the inward feeling of lowliness, modesty is the outward expression of it; humility leads a man to feel that he deserves little, modesty leads him to demand little.

"The ancient sages, amidst all their panegyrics upon virtue, and inquiries into the elements of moral excellence, not only valued humility at an exceedingly low estimate, but reckoned it a quality so contemptible as to neutralize the other properties which went, in their estimation, to the composition of a truly noble and exalted character. These sentiments have been adopted in modern times by the great majority both of the vulgar and of the philosophers, differing from their predecessors chiefly in this circumstance, the more complete absence of that humility and modesty which would have adorned them, and in their determined and obstinate rejection of that true standard of character after which the ancients so eagerly sought. By the touchstone which Christianity applies to the human character, it is found that pride and independence, which the world falsely dignifies with the epithet honourable, are really base alloy; and that of every character, formed upon proper principles, and possessed of genuine worth, humility is at once a distinguishing feature, and the richest ornament. And on this subject, as on every other, Christianity accords with the sentiments of right reason, that it is unquestionably the duty of every intelligent, especially every imperfect, creature to be humble; for they have nothing which

they have not received, and are indebted, in every movement they make, to an agency infinitely superior to their own."

The religion of the Bible is the only system either in ancient or modern times which has assigned to humility the rank of a virtue, or made provision for its cultivation. Christianity assigns to it the highest place, and a sort of pre-eminence among the graces of piety; bestows upon it the greatest commendations, enforces it by the most powerful motives, encourages it by the richest promises, draws it into exercise by the most splendid examples, and represents it as the brightest jewel in the Christian's crown. Every thing in the word of God is calculated to humble us: the description which it contains of the divine character, combining infinite greatness, goodness, and glory, compared with which the loftiest being is an insignificant atom, and the purest heart as depravity itself; the view it gives us of innumerable orders of created intelligences, all above man in the date of their existence, the capacity of their minds, and the elevation of their virtue; the account it preserves of the intellectual and moral perfection of man in his pristine innocence, and the discovery which it furnishes of the height from which he has fallen, and the contrast it draws between his present and his original nature; the declaration it makes of the purity of the eternal law, and the immeasurable depth at which we are seen to lie beneath its obligations; the history it exhibits of the circumstances of man's fall, of the progress of his sin, and of the numberless and awful obliquities of his corruptions; the characteristics it affixes to his situation as a sinner, a rebel, an enemy of God, a child of wrath, an heir of perdition; the

method it presents for his redemption from sin and hell, a scheme which he neither invented, thought of, nor aided, but which, from first to last, is the grace of God, manifested in and through the propitiation of Christ; a plan which, in all its parts, and in all its bearings, seems expressly devised to exclude boasting; the means by which it asserts that the renovation and sanctification of the human heart are carried on, until established and secured unto eternal life, even by the effectual operation of a divine agency; the sovereignty which it proclaims, as regulating the dispensations of celestial mercy; the examples which it holds forth of the astonishing lowliness and self-abasement of others far superior to man in their mental and moral natures, such as the profound abasement of the angelic race, but especially the unparalleled humiliation of Him, who, though God, was found in the form of a servant; these considerations, which are all drawn from the Scriptures, supply incentives to humility, and demonstrate upon Christian principles, that pride is the most unreasonable, as well as the most unrighteous thing in the universe. Pride is opposed and humility is supported, by every possible view that we can take of divine revelation. An acquaintance with these great principles of inspired truth, at least an experimental knowledge of them, will bring down the loftiest of men's looks, and silence the tongue of arrogant boasting. Surely, surely, he that is conversant with these things will see little cause for self-valuation, as Mr Hume calls pride; or for that self-publication, which is the essence of vanity.

While every true-hearted Christian is thankful that the Son of God stooped so low for his salvation, he rejoices that his state of humiliation is past. "If ye

love me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father." The eclipse is over, the sun has resumed his original brightness, and the heavenly world is illuminated by his rays. That man in whom was no form nor comeliness for which he should be desired, sits upon the throne of the universe, wearing a crown of immortal glory, and is adored by angels and men. His humility has conducted to honour; his sorrow has terminated in unspeakable joy. "His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him; for thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." Similar will be the result in the case of those who follow his steps, and tread the lowly path in which he has commanded them to walk. The crown of glory is reserved for the humble, but shame shall be the reward of the proud. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There is no operation of Christian love more beautiful, none more rare, than this; let professing Christians set themselves to work with their own proud hearts, and their own boasting tongues, remembering that they who sink the lowest in humility in this world, shall assuredly rise to the highest honour in the world to come.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECORUM OF LOVE.

"Charity doth not behave itself unseemly."

A STATION for every person, and every person in his station; a time for every thing, and every thing in its time; a manner for every thing, and every thing in that manner: is a compendious and admirable rule for human conduct, and seems to approach very nearly to the property of charity which we are now to consider. There is some difficulty in ascertaining the precise idea which the apostle intended by the original term. Perhaps the most correct rendering is "indecorously," "unbecomingly," i.e., unsuitably to our sex, rank, age, or circumstances. Love leads a man to know his place, and to keep it; and prevents all those deviations which disturb the comfort of society by disarranging its order. This is so general and comprehensive a rule that it would admit of application to all the various distinctions which exist in life. It is absolutely universal, and binds with equal force the monarch and the peasant, and all the numerous intermediate ranks. It requires consistency between a man's station and his conduct, viewed in the light of Christianity. It says to every man, "Consider your circumstances, and fulfil every

just expectation to which they give rise." By the common consent of mankind, there is a certain line of conduct appropriate to every relation in society, which may be called the symmetry of life, and cannot perhaps be better expressed than by the word "decorum." I will select a few of the more prominent distinctions of society, and see how love preserves them without giving offence.

The relation of monarch and subject is one of the social ties; and in reference to this, love would prevent the former from employing the kingly power to crush the liberty, subvert the interests, or impoverish the resources, of his people; while it would equally prevent them from despising the person, exposing the defects, evading the authority, disturbing the peace, or embarrassing the reign, of the monarch: tyranny on the part of a prince, and rebellion on the part of his subjects, are equally unbecoming, and both are hostile to that love which seeks the happiness of all.

The distinction of male and female is to be supported by all propriety of conduct. On the part of a man, if he be single, all trifling with the affections, all liberties with the person, all taking advantage of the weakness, of the other sex, is explicitly forbidden; as is all neglect oppression and unkindness towards his wife, if he be married. How unseemly is it for a husband to become either the slave or the tyrant of his wife; either in pitiful weakness to abdicate the throne of domestic government, or to make her a crouching vassal trembling in its shadow: and how disgusting a spectacle is a husband abandoning the society of his wife for the company of other females, and flirting, though perhaps with no criminal intention, with either single or married

women! On the other hand, how disgusting in unmarried women, is a bold obtrusiveness of manner, an impudent forwardness of address, a clamorous and monopolizing strain of conversation, an evident attempt to attract the attention of the other sex! For modesty is the ornament which most becomes the female character. Women, if married, should be stayers at home, and not gossips abroad: should look well to the ways of their household, and preside over its affairs in the meekness of wisdom; for domestic indolence and neglect is in a wife and a mother most unseemly: nor is it less offensive to see the female head of a family usurping the seat of government, and reducing her husband to the rank of mere prime minister to the queen. Women never act more unseemly than when they become busy meddling partisans, either in politics or church affairs. Nothing can be more offensive than to see a female busybody running from house to house to raise a party, and to influence a decision of a church; forgetting that her place is home, and her duty to learn of her husband in silence. Whatever admiration has been bestowed on the heroic females of Sparta, who fought by the side of their husbands, no such eulogy will be gained by ecclesiastical heroines, whose martial ardour leads them into the arena of church contentions. Christian charity would repress all unmeet, indecorous zeal.

Parents and guardians will be guarded by love, if they yield to its influence, from all becoming conduct. Fathers will neither be tyrannical nor too indulgent; will neither govern their children as slaves with a rod of iron, nor, relaxing all discipline, throw the reins into their hands: for how incongruous is tyranny with a

relation that implies the tenderest affection: and how unseemly is a cessation of rule in one who is invested by heaven with a sacred authority! Decorum requires in children the most prompt and willing obedience, the most genuine and manifest affection, the most respectful and humble demeanour towards their parents, and the most anxious and ingenious endeavours to promote their happiness. Every thing in the demeanour of a child to a parent approaching to familiarity is unbecoming; much more any thing savouring of pertness, most of all any thing amounting to refractoriness. In those cases where the high moral and intellectual qualities of parents are such as almost to command the exercise of filial piety from children, there is no difficulty in rendering it; but where these qualities are not possessed, there is greater danger of young persons forgetting what is due to the parental relation, and acting very improperly towards those who, whatever may be their faults, are still their parents. It is excessively unbecoming to hear children of any age, however matured or advanced, exposing, perhaps ridiculing, their parents' infirmities, treating their opinions with scorn, reproving or upbraiding them to their face. Let all young people recollect that whatever may be the character of a parent, "A mother is a mother still, the holiest thing alive."

With regard to superiors and inferiors, it is very easy to see what kind of conduct is seemly, and what is unsuitable. To the former, decorum prohibits all improper familiarity, for this generates contempt; and at the same time all pride and hauteur, together with all insulting condescension. Inferiors are most tenderly alive to, and most keenly susceptible of, all real or

supposed slights from those above them: and the feelings excited by such treatment are of the most painful kind. Pride is the most cruel of the passions, being utterly reckless of the wounds which it inflicts, the groans which it extorts, or the tears which it causes to flow. Even in its mildest exercise, by a look of scorn, a word of insult, it often darts a barbed arrow into the breast of an inferior; by a deliberate and persevering scheme of mortification, it remorselessly crucifies the object of its contempt. O, how unbecoming to employ superiority only as an eminence from which, with a sort of eagle's ferocity, to pounce with greater force on a victim below! Dignified affability is the decorum of superiority, which while it does not remove the line of distinction, does not render it painfully visible. Love will make us cautious not to wound the feelings of others by talking to them of our superiority, or in any way making them feel it. On the part of inferiors, it will prevent all encroaching familiarity, all presuming upon manifested kindness, all attempts, or even wishes, to level the distinctions of society, all rude, uncourteous, uncivil demeanour. Some persons seem to act as if religion removed the obligation to civility, declared war with courtesy, and involved a man in hostility with everything lovely. Incivility or rudeness manifested by the poor to the rich, by servants to masters, or by the illiterate to the well-informed, is unfriendly to the peace and good order of society, and therefore contrary to Christian love.

Age and youth are also distinctions requiring difference of conduct. Levity, puerility, and folly, are among the qualities which are indecorous in the former; while obtrusiveness, forwardness, loquaciousness, and perti-

nacity, are unseemly in the latter: age to be lovely should treat youth with kindness and forbearance; while youth should treat age with reverence, respect, and deference.

These distinctions, when found in the church, where they exist as well as in the world, should be maintained under the most powerful influence of the holy disposition which I am now illustrating. It will teach us with all candour and impartiality to judge of our station, and to adorn it with actions suitable to it. Any thing unbecoming is sure to give offence, and to produce discomfort. Whether our rank be high or low, we cannot violate the rule which prescribes its duties, without occasioning pain. Men are united in society like the organs and limbs in the human body; and one cannot, in either case, be put out of its place without producing uneasiness in the rest. The object of love is to keep all in their proper places, and thus to promote the well-being of all.

There is another sense which this expression will bear, and that is love does not allow its possessor to act unworthily of his profession as a disciple of Christ. Consistency is beauty, and the want of it produces deformity, even in a character in which many excellences are manifest. The brightest displays of moral worth in some things, if associated with obvious and great improprieties in others, lose all their attraction and power to edify or delight, and are the occasion of pain instead of pleasure to the spectator. The rule which the apostle has laid down is particularly worthy of the attention of us all: "Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these

things." It is not enough for us to acknowledge practically the claims of truth, purity, and justice; we must also meet and answer every expectation which our profession and our principles have raised. Whatever is generally esteemed to be lovely, whatever is usually spoken of as excellent, whatever it be which by general consent is considered honourable and praiseworthy, that must a follower of Christ consider to be matter of duty to him. There is nothing good in itself, or advantageous to others; nothing calculated to edify by the power of example, or to bless in the way of direct energy and influence; nothing adapted to give pleasure or to remove distress; but is implied in the very nature of piety. Religion is the likeness of God in the soul of man, and a Christian is truly an imitator of God: hence he is called "to walk worthy of God;" to act as becomes one who professes to bear the Divine image. Let any one contemplate the moral attributes of the Deity, and think what that man ought to be, who professes to give to the world a living miniature representation of that infinitely glorious Being. On the ground of consistency he should be blameless and harmless; a follower only of that which is good; holy in all manner of conversation and godliness; a beautiful specimen of whatsoever is noble, dignified, generous, and useful. The world take us at our word; they accept our profession as the rule of their expectation; and although they often look for too much, considering the present imperfect state of human nature, yet to a certain extent their demands are authorised by our own declarations. What in reason may not be looked for from one who professes to have received the word of Christ, the temper of heaven, the impress of eternity,

the nature of God? Hence, the least deviations from rectitude are apparent in those who make such professions; the least specks of imperfection are conspicuous on so bright a ground; faults stand out in bold relief and obtrusive prominence in such a light. Our profession invites the eye of scrutiny: we are not suffered to pass the ordeal of public opinion without the most rigid scrutiny; we are brought out from obscurity, and held up to be examined in the light of the sun. Failings which in others would escape detection, are quickly discerned and loudly proclaimed in us; and it is therefore of immense consequence that we should take care what manner of persons we are. Without consistency, even our good will be evil spoken of; the least violation of this rule will attach suspicion to our most distinguished virtues, and bring discredit on the best of our actions.

A want of consistency in true Christians is a violation of the law of love in various ways. By exciting a prejudice against religion, it does harm to the souls of men; it makes them satisfied with their state as unconverted persons, by leading them to consider as a hypocrite every one professing a more serious regard to religion than his neighbours. It is very true that this is unfair; that it is attending more to exceptions than the general rule; that it is giving credence to little things, and suffering them to have the weight which is due only to the qualities really constituting the character; but as this is their way, it makes every departure from consistency on our part not only sinful, but injurious; not only guilty in the sight of God, but cruel towards man. The minor faults of Christians do more harm, in the way of hardening the hearts of sinners, than the greatest excesses of the openly wicked;

for the reason that nothing else is expected from the latter, their conduct excites no surprise, produces no disappointment. We have not been sufficiently aware of this: we have confined our attention too exclusively to the avoiding of open immorality; we have not directed our solicitude enough to "the whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." To the question, "What do ye more than others?" we have thought it enough to answer, "We are more pure, more true, more devotional, more zealous," without being careful to be more dignified, more honourable, more generous in all things. Little things have been forgotten in the contemplation of great ones; secret faults have been lost sight of in the abhorrence of presumptuous sins.

A want of courtesy is a violation of the law of love in another way; it excites a prejudice against our brethren, and involves them in our failings. By such conduct we bring suspicion upon others, and thus subject them to much undeserved obloquy. The world deals unfairly with us I admit, in making us answerable for the conduct of each other, without giving the body any benefit from the virtues of individuals: however splendid and remarkable may be the excellences that any individual of our number may possess, however brilliant the example of an eminent believer may be, they do not let his brightness fall upon the rest, he is seen alone in his glory; while the sins of one are generally imputed to all, and the shadow of a single person's transgression is sometimes made to fall over the whole community. What an argument is this with us all for consistency: for what cruelty is it to our brethren by our inconsistencies to involve them in unmerited reproach!

Besides, what grief does the unworthiness of one member occasion to all who are associated with him in the fellowship of the Gospel. When a member of a church has acted unbecomingly, and caused the ways of godliness to be spoken ill of, what a wound has been inflicted on the body; for if one member suffer in his reputation, all the rest must, as far as their peace is concerned, suffer with him. This is one of the finest displays of Christian sympathy, one of the purest exhibitions of love, of love to God, to Christ, to man, to holiness. The misconduct of their erring brother has occasioned no loss to them of worldly substance, and bodily ease, or social comfort; but it has dishonoured Christ, has injured the cause of religion in public estimation, and this has touched the tenderest chord of each renewed heart. What affliction has sometimes been circulated through a whole society by the unbecoming behaviour of a single member! The apostle has given a very striking proof of this, in his representation of the feelings of the Corinthian church, after they had taken a right view of the delinquency of the incestuous person: "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" This is only a counterpart of what often happens now, and shows that every thing unseemly is a most flagrant offence against the rule of Christian love.

Want of decorum may be considered also not only in a general point of view, but as having reference to our conduct towards our brethren, meaning anything

unsuitable to, or out of character with, our profession as church members.

Improper treatment of the pastor, is obviously a want of the decorum of love. If his office be disesteemed, and his scriptural authority resisted; if attempts are made to lower him in the opinion of the church, and to deprive him of the rule with which he is invested by the Lord Jesus Christ; if his opinion is treated with disrespect, and his just influence over the feelings of his flock is undermined; if he is rudely and impertinently addressed; if he is unnecessarily opposed in his schemes for public or private usefulness; if his sermons are despised or neglected, and his ecclesiastical administration treated with suspicion or contempt; if his temporal support is scantily or grudgingly afforded; if his comfort is not carefully consulted and assiduously built up; there is a flagrant want of decorum on the part of the members of that church, for they are enjoined to "obey them that have the rule over them," "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," and "to hold such in reputation."

Lust of power, and an ambitious desire of preponderating influence, is manifestly unbecoming in one who acknowledges himself the member of a society where all are equals, and the servants of a Master who has thus addressed his disciples: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but

to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." A love of power seems almost inherent in the human bosom, and is an operation of that selfishness which enters so deeply into the essence of fallen nature. Nothing can be more opposed to love than this. Ambition throughout its bustling and violent career, is the most unsocial and uncharitable passion that can exist. The furies are its allies, and it tramples down in its course all the charities and courtesies of life. When this disposition has taken full possession of the heart, there is no cruelty which it will hesitate to inflict, no desolation which it will scruple to cause. The lesser exhibitions of this vice, and its more moderate workings, will still be attended with some proofs of its unsocial nature. Let a man once desire to be pre-eminent and predominant, in influence or power, and he will not be very regardful of the feelings of those whom he desires to subjugate. It is much to be deplored that the Christian church should ever be the field where rival candidates for power struggle for superiority: yet how often has this been seen to be the case, not merely in the conclave, where aspiring cardinals have practised all artifices finesses and duplicity, to gain the tiara; not merely amongst mitred prelates for a higher seat on the Episcopal bench: no; but amongst the lay-brethren of an Independent church. How anxious and restless have they sometimes shown themselves to be leading men, influential members, the oracles of the minister, and the ruling elders of the church. They must not only be consulted in everything, but consulted first. Every plan must emanate from them, or else be approved by them, before it is submitted to the rest. The apostle has drawn their picture to the life, where he

says, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."* Such an individual must be a source of discomfort to his brethren in communion. There may be no competitor for the sceptre regarding him with envy, but the whole community are grieved and offended by his unlovely and encroaching disposition.

There are cases, it is admitted, in which age, experience, wisdom, benevolence, and activity, are so beautifully combined in an individual, as to place him above all his brethren in influence. When he opens his mouth in wisdom, all are silent: and the pastor hearkens with the rest in respectful deference to his opinion. No one would think of proposing any scheme till he had been consulted, and his disapproval mildly expressed would be thought a sufficient reason for laying it aside. He has power, but it has come to him without his seeking it, and it is employed not to exalt himself, but to benefit the church. His sway is the influence of love: and all that influence is employed by him, not to raise himself into a rival with his pastor for the upper seat in the church, but to support the authority and dignity of the pastoral office. Such men we have sometimes seen in our communities, and they have been a blessing

* III John, 9, 10. It is evident to me that Diotrephes was a minister: but the features of the picture apply with equal force to an ambitious and aspiring layman; his lust of power is still more censurable, since it has not even the basis of office to rest upon.

to the people and a comfort to the minister. If any individuals could have been found in the circle where they moved, so flippant and so forward as to treat them with the least degree of disrespect, every one besides would have been loud in the expression of his disapprobation of such an act of censurable indecorum.

Unseemliness in the conduct of a church member towards his brethren, applies to all that is rude, unmannerly, or uncivil. "No ill-bred man," says Dr Adam Clarke, in his comments on this word, "or what is commonly termed rude or unmannerly, is a Christian," certainly he is not a consistent one. "A man may have a natural bluntness, or be a clown, and yet there may be nothing boorish or hoggish in his manner. I must apologise for using such words, but they best express the evil against which I wish to declaim successfully. I never like to meet with those who affect to be called 'blunt, honest men;' who feel themselves above all the forms of civility and respect, and care not how many they put to pain, how many they displease. But let me not be misunderstood: I do not contend for ridiculous ceremonies and hollow compliments: there is surely a medium: and a sensible Christian man will not be long at a loss to find it out. Even that people who profess to be above all worldly forms, are rarely found to be rude, uncivil, or ill-bred." There is much good sense in these remarks, deserving the attention of all professing Christians who have at heart the credit of religion, and the comfort of their brethren. It is inconceivable what a great degree of unnecessary distress is occasioned by a disregard of this rule, and how many hearts are continually bleeding from the wounds inflicted by incivility and

rudeness. We should be careful to avoid this; for religion gives no man a release from the courtesies of life. In our private intercourse with our brethren, we should be anxious to give no offence. If we feel it our duty at any time, as we sometimes may, to expostulate with a brother on the impropriety of his conduct, we should be most studiously cautious to abstain from all appearance of being impertinently officious, or offensively blunt. Reproof, or expostulation, is rarely palatable, even when administered with the honied sweetness of Christian kindness; but it is wormwood and gall when mingled with uncourteousness, and will then generally be rejected with disdain and disgust. We must never think of acting the part of a reprover, till we have put on humility as a garment, and taken up the law of kindness in our lips.

Nothing is more likely to lead to incivility than repeated and vexatious interruptions when we are engaged in some interesting or important business, or when we are required to comply with unreasonable requests. I have known cases in which, though application was made for what the applicant thought to be a very reasonable matter, his request was treated with such scorn, and denied with such abruptness and coarseness of manner, as to send him home with an arrow in his heart; when a few moments spent in explanation, or a denial given in kind and respectful language, would have completely satisfied him. It is admitted that it is trying, and of very common occurrence in the present day, to be called from important occupations to listen to tales of woe, to read the statement of want, or to answer the inquiries of ignorance; but still we must not be, ought not to be, rude. Sudden interruptions

are apt to throw a man off his guard: for he has scarcely time to call into exercise his principles, before his passions are up and busy. It is said of Mr Romaine, that he was one day called upon by a poor woman in distress of soul, for the purpose of gaining instruction and consolation. The good man was busy in his study; and on being informed that a poor woman wanted to converse with him below, exclaimed with great incivility of manner, "Tell her I cannot attend to her." The humble applicant, who was within hearing of the reception her case had met with, said, "Ah, Sir! your Master would not have treated thus a burdened penitent who came to him for mercy." "No, no," replied the good man, softened by an appeal which his heart could not resist, "he would not: come in, come in!" Too, too often has the same petulant indecorum been manifested by others, without being accompanied by the same reparation: they have pierced the heart, and left the wound to fester: the petitioners have carried away from their door their misery not only unrelieved, but greatly aggravated. But there is a peculiar sensitiveness on the subject of pecuniary contributions in some persons: to ask for them is an offence, which they pay back in insult.* They are the

* I must here notice the applications so frequent in the present day for contributions to building cases and public institutions. I am aware that the bells and knockers of some persons' doors are rarely silent long together, and their parlours and counting-houses rarely free from "beggars" a single hour of any day; I am also aware how trying it is to be called away from occupations of importance to attend to such cases; but even this does not justify a man for going into a passion at the sight of a red book, and a black coat, and almost ordering the bearer off the premises as an impostor or vagrant. Let such persons ask, whether it is not misery enough to pace the streets

Nabals of the church, if, indeed, the church could have a Nabal. What can be more unseemly than words which would disgrace a man, dropping, dropping? no, flowing in a stream, from the lips of a professing Christian!

Unbecoming rudeness should be most sedulously avoided in the public intercourse of the church, and in our social circles, when we meet as brethren. Every thing of flat contradiction, of unwarrantable suspicion concerning the truth of a statement; all seeming contempt for the opinions of others; all attempts to interrupt or bear down by clamour and vehemence,

of a city or a large town, and at the end of a long day's weary pilgrimage, have to count up far more "Noes" than pounds? I have never known by experience, but I have heard by report, the sorrows of begging ministers; and from regard to common humanity, as well as from a wish to save the ministerial character from degradation, I do most ardently desire some scheme in place of the present mode of raising money from rich Christians, to help the necessities of their poorer brethren. But till that scheme shall be devised, and I am afraid the time is far distant which shall produce it, let me plead for civility towards those who are still doomed to bear the yoke of bondage. "Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." So says Christ of his brethren, and says it in reference both to benefits and neglects. When popular men travel from place to place, many houses are open to receive them, many tables spread to entertain them. They meet with no rudeness, no unkindness. But this is for their own sakes. Our regard for Christ is proved by our conduct to the least, not to the greatest, of his brethren. And are the great ministers free from all blame, in reference to their conduct towards their humbler brethren? They are glad to entertain the popular favourites of the day, the men of name or talents; but how do they behave to the "Multi præterea quos fama obscura recondit?" Do they not order them to be sent away from their door without an audience, or keep them long waiting for an interview, and then dismiss the good man, sorrowfully exclaiming, "Am I not thy brother?"

those with whom we may be engaged in discussion, should be most anxiously abstained from. It is truly painful to observe, what an utter disregard for the feelings of their brethren is often manifested by some ardent sticklers for their own opinions and plans. But is not civility a Christian grace? Did not the apostle say, Be courteous? Why should that which is considered by the world as a rich decoration of character, as softening and embellishing the intercourse of society, and as so important and necessary as to be placed under the guardianship of what is called the law of honour, and to be avenged by the punishment of death; why should this ever be considered as of little moment in the business of religion, and the fellowship of the faithful? If rudeness be considered as a blemish upon talents, rank, and fame, must it not be viewed also as a blot and deformity upon piety? Most certainly it is regarded as such by love, whose anxiety to do whatever would give pleasure, and to avoid whatever would occasion distress, is not greater than its delicate perception of every thing that will assist it to do so.

We see in this subject the wonderful excellence of Christianity as a code of morals, a rule of conduct, and a body of principles: for in addition to specific laws, intended to operate in the production of certain virtues and the prevention of certain vices, it has general and comprehensive precepts, capable of universal application, of so plain a nature as to be understood by the dullest intellect, and possessing at the same time a beauty which gives them an interest in every heart; so that if in the specialties of Christian morals, properly so called, any case should be overlooked, or any situa-

tion should not be reached, any distinction between virtue and vice should be so minute that language should fail adequately to mark it, any delicacy of character so refined as not to be taken into the account, here is something to supply the defect, and render the law of God perfect for converting the soul. Love does not act unbecomingly; and who is so ignorant, if he would but consult his conscience, as not to know what others would think unbecoming in him?

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF LOVE.

Charity seeketh not her own.

If it were required to give a brief and summary description of man's original apostacy, I might say that it was his departing from God, the fountain of his happiness and the end of his existence, and retiring into himself, as the ultimate end of all his actions: and if it were asked what is now the essence of his sin, the sum of his moral depravity, I might say, to love himself supremely, to seek himself finally and exclusively, to make self, in one shape or another, the centre to which all his busy thoughts, anxious cares, and diligent pursuits, constantly tend. Self-love is the most active and reigning principle in fallen nature; self is the great idol which mankind are naturally disposed to worship; and selfishness the grand interest to which they are devotedly attached. But the grace of God, when it renews the heart, so far corrects and subdues this disposition, as to deprive it of its fatal ascendency, and implant in its stead its direct contrary, the principle of love, leading us to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Seeing, then, that the perfection of virtue lies in dis-

interested love, it follows, that the nearer we approach to this state of mind, the nearer we come to sinless moral excellence. This is the temper of the innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. It has been argued that we take delight in the happiness of others, because their happiness increases our own: but the circumstance of our happiness being increased by promoting theirs, is itself a convincing proof of the existence and exercise of an antecedent good-will towards them. Our felicity is raised by theirs. Why? because we love them. Why am I made unhappy by the sight of another's woe? because I have good-will to the subject of distress. It is true I am gratified by relieving him, and my comfort would be disturbed if I did not: but what is the origin of these feelings? Certainly a previous good-will towards him. It is not affirmed that all pity proceeds from holy love: but that where love does exist, and in the proportion in which it exists, it is disinterested, and is distinguished from selfishness.

It may be proper here to distinguish between self-love and selfishness; which are not etymologically different, but have very different meanings. By selfishness, we mean such a regard to our own things as is inconsistent with, and destructive of, a right regard to the interests of others; whereas by self-love we mean nothing more than that attention to our own affairs which we owe to ourselves as part of universal being. Selfishness means the neglect or injury of others, in order to concentrate our views, and desires, and pursuits in ourselves; while self-love means only that proper and due regard which we may pay to our own interests, without the neglect or injury of our neigh-

bour. Self-love, when exercised in connection with, and subordinate to, good-will to mankind, as it may be, is not only consistent with virtue, but is a part of it; but when not thus connected, it degenerates into selfishness. Selfishness leads men to seek their own interests in opposition to the interests of others. Multitudes care not whom they oppress, so that they establish their own power; whom they vilify and degrade, so that they increase their own fame; whom they impoverish, so that they accumulate wealth; whom they distress, so that they augment their own comforts. This is the worst and most cruel operation of selfishness. It is the same propensity, only sharpened, guided, and rendered more mischievous by the aid of reason, as that which exists in the tiger, and which gorges itself to repletion, deaf to the piercing cries of the hapless victim which struggles in its talons. Intent only on gratification, it riots amidst misery, if by this means it can aggrandise itself. Looking on the possessions of those around only with an envious eye, it is solicitous that they may be appropriated in some way to itself. This is a horrible and truly infernal disposition; for it would reign with a kind of universal despotism, would subdue all into vassalage, and suffer nothing to exist, but what was tributary to its own comfort.

Selfishness sometimes leads its subjects only to neglect the things of others. They do not oppress, or injure, or despoil; they are neither robbers nor calumniators; but they are so engrossed by self-interest, and so absorbed in self-gratification, as to be utterly regardless of the misery or comfort of those around them. They have no sympathies, no benevolent sensibilities: they have cut themselves off from their species, and

care nothing for the happiness of any of their neighbours. Their highest boast and attainment in virtue is to wrong none: their idea of excellence is purely of a negative kind: to dispel sorrow, to relieve want, to diffuse gladness, especially to make sacrifices to do this, is an effort which they have never tried, and which they have no inclination to try. The world might perish if the desolation did not reach them. Miserable and guilty creatures, they forget that they will be punished for not doing good, as well as for doing evil. The unprofitable servant was condemned, and the wicked are represented, at the last day, as doomed to hell, not for inflicting sorrow, but for not relieving it.

A man is guilty of selfishness, if he seeks his own interest out of all proportion to the regard he pays to the interest of others. It may be that from a regard to our reputation, we do not live in the total neglect of those around us, and in deference either to public opinion, or to the remonstrances of our consciences, are compelled to yield something to the claims of the public; yet, at the same time, our concessions may be so measured in quantity, and made with such reluctance and ill-will, that our predominant selfishness may be as clearly manifested by what we give, as by what we withhold. That which we call our liberality, manifests, in this case, our avarice; that which we denominate generosity, demonstrates our sinful self-love.

Selfishness sometimes seeks its own under the pretence and profession of promoting the happiness of others. Where the ruling passion of the heart is the love of applause, large sacrifices of wealth, time, ease, and feeling, will be readily made for fame: and where men have objects to gain which require kindness, con-

ciliation, and attention, nothing in this way is too much to be done to accomplish their purpose; and this is perhaps the most disgusting operation of this very disgusting vice. Many are the detestable traders in generosity who only barter for something in return. How much of the seeming goodness of human nature, of the sympathy with human woe, of the pity for want, of the anxiety for the comfort of wretchedness, which passes current for virtue among mankind, is nothing better than a counterfeit imitation of benevolence, is known only to that God whose omniscient eye traces the secret workings of our depravity through all the labyrinths of a deceitful heart.

But notice now the subjects in reference to which selfishness is indulged.

Property is the first. Selfishness shows itself in an anxiety to obtain wealth, and an unwillingness to part with it: a disposition greedy as the sea, and barren as the shore. You will see some men so excessively eager to get profit, that they are ever watching to take undue advantage; and so keen-eyed in looking after their own, that they need to be closely inspected, to prevent them from taking more than their own: for a man who is prevailingly selfish can hardly be honest. And what they gain, they keep: neither the cause of humanity, nor of religion, can extort a guinea from them, except now and then, to get rid of an importunate suitor, or to prevent their reputation from being utterly ruined.

It is sometimes exercised in reference to opinion. Some will not bear contradiction; they must be listened to as sages; to question what they say is to insult them, and is sure to bring down on the presumptuous sceptic their contempt or their frown. They will scarcely

allow any one to speak but themselves; they must be the oracle of every company, and the director of every affair, or they retire in disgust, and refuse to act at all. In the concerns of our churches this is often seen and felt. What is it but pure selfishness that leads any one to wish that he should dictate to the rest; that his opinion should be law; and his wishes should be consulted and obeyed? This is not love: no; love gives up her own, where conscience does not interfere to forbid it, and meekly and quietly resigns her wishes to increase peace and promote harmony; her object is the public good, and her law is the best means of promoting the general welfare. If in the intercourse of life, or the affairs of a church, every individual determined to consult only his own views and wishes, society would be dissolved, and its separate parts embroiled in a state of mutual conflict. In the various discussions which come before a public body, Selfishness says, "I am sure my opinion is correct; and I will if possible have my way;" but the language of Love is, "I have stated my opinion and my wishes; if my views do not carry conviction, I by no means wish them to be adopted, nor my desires to be gratified: I am anxious for the comfort of my brethren, and I yield my wishes to theirs."

Some persons have acquired habits in their general conduct, which are exceedingly annoying to others; they have notions of personal gratification, or peculiarities of humour, which it is impossible to indulge without greatly incommoding those around them; but so detestably selfish is their disposition, with regard to these practices, that let who will be disturbed, offended, or put to serious inconvenience, they will not forego them. When the unfortunate sufferers were expiring in the

Black Hole at Calcutta, and entreated the sentinels to represent their agonizing and fatal condition to the tyrant who had imprisoned them, the guards answered, "No; he is enjoying his repose, and it will be certain death to us if we disturb him, even for your relief." And how much better in principle is that regard to their own persons, appetite, ease, or humour, which many indulge to the annoyance of their neighbours, and in spite of the remonstrances of those who suffer from it? In short, that regard to our comfort, which leads us to neglect or sacrifice the happiness of another, let its object be what it may, is the selfishness which kindness opposes and destroys.

This hateful disposition has contrived to conceal itself under many false names and disguises, and thus to find protection from much of the obloquy which it deserves, and which would otherwise be more unsparingly heaped upon it.

The plea of frugality, or a just regard to the claims of a man's family, is often urged as an excuse for the selfishness of avarice. A man certainly must take care of his own, but not to the injury, or even to the neglect, of all besides. "I have no more," it is often said, "than I want for my style of living; and that style I think necessary for my rank in life. I spend all I get upon my family, and hoard nothing: how, then, can I be selfish?" Mistaken mortal! do you forget that a man's family is himself multiplied, himself reflected? Selfish? yes, you are detestably so, if you spend all upon yourself and family, however lavish and unsparing you may be to them.

No expression, no sentiment, has ever been more abused than that of the apostle, "Do all to the glory

of God." It has been employed to diguise the most improper motives, but has never been more frequently, or more profanely abused, than to give a character of religious zeal to actions which, as every eye could discern, originated in unmixed selfishness. It is to be feared that when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, it will be found that while much has been professedly done for the glory of God in the affairs of religion, pure zeal for God's glory is a very rare thing. Certain it is, that much of what has been carried on under the sanction of this truly sublime phrase, has originated in a far less hallowed principle. The Gospel has been preached by ministers; places of worship have been built by hearers; distant lands have been visited by missionaries; yea, imprisonment and death may have been sought by martyrs, in some cases, not from pure zeal for God's glory, but from selfishness. All sorts of artful practices have been supported, all kinds of stormy passions have been indulged, all kinds of injuries have been inflicted, under the pretence of glorifying God, but, in fact, under the influence of this disposition. When a man is identified with a party, that party is himself, and what he does for it, he does for himself.

The same remarks will apply to many of those actions which are performed on the professed ground of regard for the public good. Pure patriotism is a scarce virtue, and is found but rarely in the breasts of those who are loudest in their praises and professions of it. Many a noisy and self-proclaimed patriot, many a zealous supporter of public institutions, many an active reformer of popular errors, many a liberal contributor to humane or religious societies, could their motives be

exposed, would be found to act from no higher aims than to get a name for themselves, and to be praised by their fellow creatures.

Some indulge this disposition under the pretext of regard for the truth. Attaching an overweening importance to their own opinions, as if they possessed the attribute of infallibility, overbearing in debate, impatient of contradiction, determined to crush the opinions and resist the influence of those who are opposed to them, they quiet their consciences, and silence the voice of remonstrance, with the plea that their vehemence is pure zeal for the interests of truth. They should be less anxious, they say, if their own personal interests were at stake; but they have a right to be earnest, yea, even to be contentious, in the defence of the faith. But they know not themselves, or they would discern that their conduct springs from a proud, imperious, and selfish spirit.

It is time to contemplate the evil of selfishness. It is in direct opposition to the divine benevolence, and is contrary to the habitual temper of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who pleased not himself." It is the cause of all misery, the opposite of all holiness and virtue, the source of innumerable other sins, and is placed by the apostle as the head and leader of the eighteen vices which he enumerates as the marks of perilous times, "Men shall be lovers of themselves." This was the sin which introduced all guilt and misery into the world: for the first transgression, by which Adam fell from innocence, and by which his posterity fell with him, was an effort to raise himself into a state of independence; by selfishness he laid the world under the burden of the divine condemnation. It is a rejection

of all the claims, and an opposition to all the ends and interests, of society; for if all persons were under the influence of predominant selfishness, society could scarcely exist: let each one seek and grasp his own, to the injury or neglect of the rest, and the world becomes a den of wild beasts, where each ravens for his prey, and all worry one another. This disposition defeats its own ends. God has endowed us with social affections, in the indulgence of which there is real pleasure: the exercise of kindness and the enjoyment of delight are inseparable. "If there be any comfort of love," says the apostle; by which he implied, in the strongest manner, that there is great comfort in it; and, of course, in proportion as we extend the range and multiply the objects of our love, we extend the range and multiply the sources of our happiness. He that loves only himself, has only one joy; he that loves his neighbours, has many joys. To rejoice in the happiness of others, is to make it our own; to produce it, is to make it more than our own. Lord Bacon has justly remarked, that our sorrows are lessened, and our felicities multiplied, by communication. Mankind had been labouring for ages under the grossest mistake as to happiness, imagining that it arose from receiving, when our Lord corrected the error, by saying, "That it is more blessed to give than to receive." A selfish man, who accumulates property, and gives nothing away, resembles not the perennial fountain sending forth fertilizing streams; but the stagnant pools, into which whatever flows remains there, and whatever remains corrupts: miser is his name, and miserable he is in disposition. Selfishness often brings a terrible retribution in this world: the tears of its wretched subject

fall unpitied: and he finds, in the gloomy hour of his want or his woe, that he who determines to be alone in his pleasure, will generally be left to himself in his sorrows; and that he who in the days of his prosperity drives every one from him by the unkindness of his disposition, will find in the season of his adversity that they are too far off to hear his cries for assistance.

This is not an incurable temper, but is a disease that requires immediate and diligent attention. Where it not only exists but predominates, the spring of human action must be renewed by regeneration, and we must have that new heart, which learns to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. We must meditate often upon the deep criminality of this disposition, and look upon it in all its deformity, till we hate it: being careful, in order to this, to strip it of all the disguises which the deceitfulness of the heart has thrown over it. We must frequently contemplate God, as infinite in love, and Jesus Christ, as the incarnation of pure disinterested affection. We must exercise perpetual self-mortification, labouring to the uttermost to subdue, and if possible to eradicate our selfishness; repeating it again and again till we begin to taste the pleasure and to feel the habit of kindness: at the same time praying earnestly for the help of the Holy Spirit, to assist us in the arduous work.

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNSUSPICIOUSNESS OF LOVE.

Charity thinketh no evil.

THERE are two senses which may be attached to this beautiful description of love.

I. It does not devise evil. What a horrible demon-like disposition has the Psalmist ascribed to the individual who has no fear of God before his eyes! "He hath left off to be wise and to do good; he deviseth mischief upon his bed." Such is the delineation given by the inspired writer of the character of some wretched men; and the original is often to be found. They are perpetually scheming to do injury; even their hours of rest are devoted to the impulses of a wicked heart, and they sleep not except they have done mischief. Instead of communing with God upon their bed, this is to commune with the devil, and to hold nightly conference with him who ranges about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But without going to the extent of those who live by plunder, extortion, or oppression, and who, as the wolves and tigers of society, are ever prowling about for their prey, there are many who maintain a tolerably respectable character, but still are busy in devising evil: this may arise from various

motives, to all of which Christian love stands firmly opposed.

Desire of gain may lead them to devise means by which they may injure a more prosperous neighbour, a more thriving tradesman than themselves. They cannot endure to witness his success, and they leave no effort untried to hinder it. They are inventive in the way of insinuation, inuendo, or open calumny, to check the tide of his good fortune, and are ever scheming to circumvent and injure him. Or they may be moved by envy to devise means for blasting the reputation of a popular rival, or at least to render him less a favourite with the public. Revenge is ever busy in laying plans to injure its object; it broods in wrathful silence over the real or supposed injury, and looks round on every side for the opportunity and the means of full retaliation.

A love of sporting with the fears of the timid and the weak has led some to delight in finding means for exciting their alarms: they do not desire to inflict pain so much from a malignity of disposition as from a wanton pleasure in raising a joke. Such jests as occasion distress are, whatever may be pretended by their authors, the pastime of the Devil, who can never desist from the work of tormenting, and who inflicts misery in very sport. It is dreadful that the human intellect should ever be employed in devising evil; and yet, passing by the cabinets of statesmen, where hostile and unprincipled aggressions are so often planned against a weaker state; and the closets of monarchs, where schemes which are to entail the horrors of war upon millions, are contrived without compunction; and the slaver's cabin, where schemes are arranged for burning peace-

ful villages, and dragging into captivity their unoffending inhabitants; and the robber's cave, the murderer's den, and the swindler's retreat; passing by all these haunts of demons, where the master-spirits of mischief hold their conclaves, and digest their dark and horrid plans; what a prodigious movement of mind is perpetually going on among the subalterns! What a frightful portion of every day's employment of mental and bodily energies, all over the globe, is seen by the eye of Omniscience to be directed by the parent of evil, who is ever going about doing and causing evil: so that a great part of mankind seem to have for their prototype the scorpions which John saw rising out of the bottomless pit, armed both with teeth and stings!

To all these persons, and to all this their conduct, love is diametrically opposed. It thinks not evil, but good; it devises to communicate pleasure, not pain. It shrinks back with instinctive abhorrence from inflicting a moment's suffering, in body or in mind. "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour," but employs all its counsels and its cares for its benefit. Like a good spirit, it is ever opposing the advice, and counteracting the influence of envy, revenge, or avarice. It would make the miserable happy, and the happy still happier. It retires into the closet to project schemes for blessing mankind, and then goes out into the crowded regions of want and wretchedness to execute them; it devises good on its bed, and rises in the morning to fulfil the plans of mercy with which it had sunk to rest. "Love thinketh no evil."

II. But most probably the apostle meant, that it does not impute evil. Lovely charity! the further we go, the more we discover thy charms; thy beauty is

such, that it is seen the more, the more closely it is inspected: and thy excellence such, that it never ceases to grow upon acquaintance. Thou art not in haste to criminate, as if it were thy delight to prove men wicked; but art willing to impute a good motive to men's actions, till a bad one is clearly demonstrated.

It is proper however to remark here, that love is not quite blind: it is not, as I have already said, virtue in its dotage, having lost its power of discrimination between good and evil: nor is it holiness in its childhood, which with puerile simplicity believes every thing that is told it, and is imposed upon by every pretender. No; it is moral excellence in the maturity of all its faculties, in the possession of all its manly strength. Like the judge upon the bench, it is acute, yet not censorious, holding the balance with an even hand, acting as counsel for the prisoner, rather leaning to the side of the accused than to that of the accuser, and holding him innocent till he is proved to be guilty.

There are some persons of a peculiarly suspicious disposition, who look with a distrustful eye upon every body, and upon every action. They seem to think the world in a conspiracy against them, and that every one approaches them with a purpose of mischief. They invert the proper order of things, and instead of imputing a good motive till a bad one is proved, impute a bad one till a good one is made apparent; and so extremely sceptical are they on the subject of moral evidence, that what comes with the force of demonstration to the rest of mankind, in the way of establishing the propriety of an action, scarcely amounts in their view to probability. Those who suspect every

body, are generally to be suspected themselves. Their knowledge of human nature has been obtained at home, and their fears in reference to their neighbours are the reflected images of their own disposition. But without going to this length, we are all too apt to impute evil to others.

1. We are too forward to suspect the piety of our neighbours, and to consider, if not direct hypocrisy, yet ignorance or presumption, as the ground of their profession. Upon some very questionable or imperfect evidence, upon some casual expression, or some doubtful action, we pronounce an individual to be a self-deceiver, or a hypocrite. There is far too much proneness to this in the religious world: too much haste in exscinding each other from the body of Christ: too much precipitancy in cutting each other off from the membership of the Church universal. To decide infallibly upon character is not only the prerogative of the Deity, but requires his attributes. There may be some grains of wheat hid among the chaff, which we may not discover. We must be careful how we set up our views, or experience, as the test of character, so as to condemn all who do not come up to our standard. It is a fearful thing to unchristianize any one, and it should be done only upon the clearest evidence of his being in an unconverted state. Without being accused of lax or latitudinarian views, I may observe that we should make great allowance for the force of education, for peculiar habits acquired in circumstances different from our own, and for a phrascology learnt among those whose views are but imperfect. To impute to a professor of religion hypocrisy, or mere formality, and to

deny the reality of his religion altogether, is too serious a thing for such short-sighted creatures as we are, except in cases which are absolutely indisputable.

2. We are too prone to impute bad motives in reference to particular actions. Sometimes where the action is good, we ascribe it to some sinister or selfish inducement operating in the mind of him by whom it is performed. This is not unfrequently done where we have no contention with the individual, and the imputation is merely the effect of envy; but it is more frequently done in cases where we have personal dislike. When the action is of a doubtful nature, how apt we are to lose sight of all the evidence which may be advanced in favour of its being done from a good motive, and with far less probability decide that the motive was bad. If we are the object of the action, we too commonly conclude instantly, and almost against evidence, that a bad motive dictated it. Although the circumstance is at worst equivocal, and admits of a two-fold interpretation, we promptly determine that an insult or an injury was intended, when every one but ourselves clearly discerns that no such design can be fairly imputed. A person passes us in the street without speaking, and we immediately believe that it was an act of intentional insult, forgetting that it is probable he did not see us, or was so immersed in thought as not to recognize us. A general remark is made in conversation, which we suppose, with no other evidence than its applicability to us, was intended to expose us before the company; when, perhaps, the individual who made it had no more reference to us than to a man on the other side of the globe. A thousand cases might be

mentioned, in which, of two motives that may be imputed, we choose the evil one. If a person has previously injured us, we are peculiarly propense to this unchristian practice of thinking evil of him. We can scarcely allow ourselves to believe that he can do any thing relating to us, but from an improper motive; we suspect all his words and all his actions: nor is the propensity less strong in those cases in which we have been the aggressors; we then set down every thing done by the injured person to the influence of revenge.

The evil of such a disposition is manifest. It is explicitly and frequently prohibited in God's Word. This is the censoriousness forbidden by our Lord, where he says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged:" and which is condemned by Paul, where he says, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." James commands us "not to speak evil one of another; for he that speaketh evil of his brother, judgeth his brother." "Evil surmisings" are placed by the apostle among the sins which oppose the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an invasion of the prerogative of Deity, who alone can search the heart, and read the motives of the breast. It is injurious to the character of our brethren, and disturbs the peace of society. Half the broils which arise in the world, and half the schisms which spring up in the church, may be traced to this wicked propensity of "thinking evil;" for if men think evil, it is an easy matter to speak evil, and then to do evil: so that the origin of many quarrels will be found in the false impression of a suspicious mind, the misapprehension of a

censorious judgment. It is a disposition which our own observation and experience are quite sufficient to correct, if we would be guided by them. How often, how very often, have we found ourselves mistaken in such cases! How frequently has subsequent evidence shown us our error in imputing a bad motive to an action, which at the time, to say the worst of it, was only of a doubtful character! We have discovered that to have originated in accident, which we once thought to have been the result of design; and we have found other things to have proceeded from ignorance, which we had hastily set down to malice. How many times have we blushed and grieved over our precipitancy; and yet in opposition to our experience and to our resolutions, we still go on to think evil.

But "love thinketh no evil;" this divine virtue delights to speak well, and think well, of others: she talks of their good actions, and says little or nothing, unless necessity compels her, of their bad ones. She holds her judgment in abeyance as to motives, till they are perfectly apparent. She does not look round for evidence to prove an evil design, but hopes that what is doubtful will, on enquiring, appear to be correct; she imputes not evil, so long as good is probable; she leans to the side of candour rather than to that of severity; she makes every allowance that truth will permit; looks at all the circumstances which can be pleaded in mitigation; suffers not her opinions to be formed till she has had opportunity to escape from the mist of passion, and to cool from the wrath of contention. Love desires the happiness of others: and how can she be in haste to think evil of them.

If it be asked, Do all good men act thus? I again reply, They act thus just in proportion as they are under the influence of Christian charity. The apostle does not say that every man who is possessed of charity does so, but that charity itself thinketh no evil; and therefore implies that every good man will act thus in the same degree in which he submits to the influence of this virtue. Divine grace! hasten thy universal reign on earth, and put an end to those evil surmisings by which the comfort of mankind and even the fellowship of the saints are so much disturbed!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOY OF LOVE.

Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

KEEPING up the personification of love as presented by the apostle, I may observe that it has its joys and its sorrows; and that its smiles and its tears are the expressions of good will, the tokens of benevolence. We are first told in what it does not take complacency: "It rejoiceth not in iniquity."

Sin is, in itself, an evil of enormous magnitude. As committed against a Being whom we are under infinite obligation to love, serve, and glorify, it must partake of infinite degrees of demerit. It is a violation of that law, which, as an emanation from the perfection of the Deity, is itself perfect, and well deserves the eulogium pronounced upon it by the apostle, when he declares it to be "holy, and just, and good." As this is the rule of government to the moral universe, and intended to preserve its order, dependence, and harmony, sin, by opposing its authority, disturbs this order, breaks this dependence, and seeks to introduce the reign of confusion and misery. None but the infinite mind is competent to calculate the mischief which is likely to be

produced by a single act of sin, if left without a remedy, or without a punishment. We have only to see what sin has done, to judge of its most evil and hateful nature. All the misery which either is or ever will be on earth, or in hell, is the result of sin. It is the greatest evil, the only evil, in the universe. It is the opposite, and the enemy, to God; the contrast of all that is pure and glorious in his divine attributes and ineffably beautiful perfections; and as such it is that which he cannot but hate with a perfect hatred. It is not merely the opposite of his nature, but the opponent of his government; the rebel principle that disputes with him the seat of majesty and the dominion of the universe, saying to him, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther;" seeking to cast him down from the throne which he has prepared in the heavens, and to rise with impious usurpation into the holy place of the high and lofty One. Sin would stop the fountain of life and blessedness, by ending the reign of infinite beneficence; and is therefore the enemy of every thing that constitutes the felicity of the various orders of rational existence. The happiness of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, and of the spirits made perfect above, as well as of those who are renewed by the grace of God on earth, arises from holiness: separate from holiness, there can be no happiness for an intellectual being. Sin, as the contrary of holiness, is the enemy of happiness. How, then, can love delight in iniquity? If it wills the felicity of rational beings, it must hate that which directly resists and extinguishes it.

And as it cannot delight in sin in the abstract, so neither can it take pleasure in committing it; for who-

ever commits it, in so far approves of it, upholds its dominion, extends its reign, diffuses its mischief, and does all he can to recommend it. If his transgression be a common one, he gives the patronage of his example to all of the same kind; and if it be a new one, he becomes an inventor and propagator upon earth of a fresh curse and torment. That many do delight in committing iniquity cannot be doubted; they follow it with greediness, and drink it in as the thirsty ox drinks in water. The Scripture speaks of the joys of fools, and of the pleasures of sin. Horrid as is the association between sin and gratification, it certainly exists. Some men have gone so far as to be self-murderers, but who ever took pleasure in the act of destroying themselves? Who ever drank the poison, as he would wine, with a merry heart? Who ever dallied in sportive pleasure with the pistol or the dagger, or wound the cord in jocularity round his throat, before he strangled himself with it? Who ever went skipping with a light fantastic step to the edge of the precipice, or the river brink, from which he was about to plunge into eternity? And yet sinners do all this in reference to their souls. They commit self-murder, the murder of their immortal spirits, to the song of the drunkard, the smile of the harlot, and the laugh of the fool. They sin, and not only so, they delight in iniquity. So does not charity.

Nor can it delight in the sins of others. It cannot, as fools do, "make a mock of sin." It is most horrid to find pastime and sport in acts of transgression by which men ruin their souls. Some laugh at the reeling gait, idiot looks, and maniac gestures of the drunkard, whom perhaps they have first led on to intoxication; or they are diverted by the oaths of the swearer, whose

malice and revenge are at work to invent new forms of profanity: or they are made merry by the mischief with which the persecutors of the righteous sometimes oppose and interrupt the solemnity of worship: or they attack with raillery and scorn the tender consciences of the saints, and loudly applaud the wit which aims its sharpened arrows against religion. But love weeps over sin, as that which brings the greatest misery. "For sin is the greatest and highest infelicity of the creature, depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauties, extinguishes its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity and peace, violates its harmonious joyful state and order, and destroys its very life. It disaffects it to God, severs it from him, engages his justice, and influences his wrath against it. What! to rejoice in sin, that despites the Creator, and hath wrought such tragedies in creation! that turned angels out of heaven, man out of paradise! that hath made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world: broken off the intercourse in so great a part between heaven and earth: obstructed the pleasant commerce which had otherwise probably been between angels and men: so vilely debased the nature of man, and provoked the displeasure of his Maker towards him! that once overwhelmed the world with a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by a destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a thing as sin, is to do that mad part, to cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, 'Am I not in sport?' It is to be glad that such an one is turning a man into a devil! a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell! to be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes, and destroying all its

possibilities of a future well-being. Blessed God! how opposite a thing is this to charity, the offspring of God! The birth of heaven, as it is here below, among mortals; the beauty and glory of it, as it is there above, in its natural seat. The eternal bond of living union among the blessed spirits that inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain here, another heaven."*

No: it is the sport of devils, not of men who might feel the influence of love, to delight in sin. We justly condemn the cruelty of the Romans, in glutting their eyes with the scenes of the amphitheatre, where the gladiators were torn in pieces by the fangs of lions and tigers; but theirs was innocent recreation compared with that of the perverted and wicked mind, which can be gratified by seeing an immortal creature ruining and damning his most precious soul. Go, laugh at the agonies of the wretched man tortured upon the rack, and make merry with his distorted features, and strange and hideous cries; go, laugh at the convulsive throes of the epileptic; go to the field of battle, and mock the groans of the wounded and dying; all this is more humane and merciful than delighting in sin. Could we look down upon the burning lake, and see there how the miserable ghosts are tossed upon the billows of the burning deep, and hear their dreadful exclamations, "Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Should we then divert ourselves with sin? Charity seeing their misery in imagination feels a cold horror and a shivering dread at sin. She mourns over it wherever she sees it, and weeps

* Howe, "On Charity in reference to other Men's Sins."

for the wicked who never weep for themselves. This is her declaration, as she looks around upon the sins of mankind, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

Love cannot delight in the misconduct of an enemy or a rival. This perhaps is the precise meaning of the apostle in the expression I am now illustrating. Few of us are without those who, correctly or not, are considered by us, or consider themselves, in the character of opponents or competitors; and in such cases there is great danger of our being pleased with their delinquencies. I should hope that few, except those who are more than ordinarily depraved, would allow themselves to go so far as to tempt an enemy to sin, in order to gain an advantage over him. Yet there are some who will lay snares for his feet, and watch with eager hope for his halting: and when unable to accomplish this by their own personal exertions, will not scruple to engage accomplices in the work. Weaker and junior agents, who know nothing, or little of the purpose for which they are employed, may be drawn by a master-spirit of mischief into the confederacy, and be made the instruments of tempting an immortal creature to sin against God, and ruin his own soul. This is the climax of revenge, the highest pitch of wickedness, and the greatest refinement of human malice. It is to extend the mischief of revenge to another world; to call in the aid of devils and the quenchless fire to supply the defects of our ability to inflict misery in proportion to our wishes, and to perpetuate our ill-will through eternity. To tempt men to sin against God, with a view to serve ourselves by

degrading them before the world, unites much of the malevolence of a devil, with as much of his ingenuity.

But if we cannot go to such a length as to tempt an opponent or a rival to sin, yet if we feel a delight in seeing him fall by other means; if we indulge a secret complacency in beholding him rendering himself vile, blasting his reputation, destroying his popularity, and ruining his cause; if we inwardly exclaim, "Ah! so would I have it, now he has done for himself, it is all over with him, this is just what I wanted;" we delight in iniquity. And oh, how inexpressibly dreadful to be seen with a smiling countenance, or an aspect which, if it relax not into a smile, is sufficiently indicative of the joyful state of the heart, to run with eagerness to proclaim the intelligence of a victory we have gained by an act of another which endangers his salvation: how contrary all this to the charity which delights in happiness!

Perhaps we only go so far as to be pleased that the object of our dislike has been himself injured in a way similar to that in which he has injured us. Although we may not allow ourselves to inflict any direct injury in the way of revenge, or engage others to do it for us, yet if we see him ill-treated by another person, and rejoice; if we exclaim, "I do not pity him, he has deserved it all for his behaviour to me; I am glad he has been taught how to behave to his neighbour;" this is contrary to the law of love, it is a complacency in sin. Nor is the case altered, if our joy be professedly felt on account of the consequences which the sin has brought upon him. We may sometimes attempt to deceive ourselves by the supposition that we do not rejoice in the

iniquity that is committed, but only because it has been succeeded by the fruits which it merited. We interpret it into a proof that God has taken up the cause of injured innocence, and avenged us of our adversary.

There are many circumstances and situations which more particularly expose us to the violation of this law of charity. In the case of two different denominations in religion, or two congregations of the same party in a town, between whom a misunderstanding and schism have been permitted to grow up, there is imminent danger of this unchristian spirit. Alas! alas! that the bosoms of men should be liable to such sentiments! Oh! shame, deep and lasting shame, upon some professing Christians, that such unhallowed emotions should ever be excited in them. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice; lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Let it not be known that the bad passions of the human heart build their nests, like obscene birds, round the altar of the Lord; or like poisonous weeds, entwine their baneful tendrils round the pillars of his house. I do not mean to say that any good man can rejoice in the open immorality and vice of an opponent; but are there not many, in all large communities, who, though of Israel in one sense, belong not to it in reality? And where an act does not amount to a positive crime, but is merely a minor breach of the laws of propriety, are not even the best of men sometimes exposed to the temptation of rejoicing over it, if their cause is promoted by it? A weaker party, especially if ill-used, and treated with pride, scorn, oppression, and cruelty, is very apt to take

delight in instances of misconduct by which his opponents have brought upon themselves the censure of the public.

Rival candidates for fame, power, or influence, either in ecclesiastical or secular affairs, are liable to the sin of rejoicing in iniquity. Hard, indeed, is it for such hearts as ours to repress all feelings of secret complacency in those acts of a competitor by which he sinks in public esteem. That man gives himself credit for more virtue than he really possesses, who imagines he should find it easy to weep over the follies and miscarriages of the rival who contends with him for a prize of importance, or the sins of an enemy who has deeply injured him. Job mentions it as a convincing proof of his integrity, and a striking display of good conduct, "If I rejoiced in the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him." And it was a fine manifestation of the generosity of David, that instead of rejoicing over those sins of Saul, which brought on the catastrophe that elevated himself to the throne of Israel, he bewailed them with as sincere and pungent grief as he could have done had Saul been the kindest of fathers. That we are in danger of the sin we are now considering, is also evident from the exhortation of Solomon, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." Charity, if it had full possession of our hearts, and entire sway over them, would not only repress all outward exhibitions of this delight, but all inward emotions of it; would make us dread lest an opponent should fall into sin; would not allow us to see him go unwarned to transgression, but compel us to admonish

him of his danger; and would make us cheerfully forego the greatest advantage to our cause or reputation, which we might gain by his misconduct. This is the holiness of love, and the proof of a general hatred for sin; for if we mourn only for our own sins, or the sins of our friends, or of our party, there may be something selfish in our grief after all; but to mourn over iniquity, when, though it does harm to another, it may, in some sense, promote our cause, is indeed to hate sin for its own sake, and for the sake of Him by whom it is condemned.

I now go on to show in what love does rejoice: "Charity rejoiceth in the truth." By the truth we are not to understand veracity as opposed to falsehood. The apostle is not speaking of this. The truth means the doctrine of the Word of God. This is a very common way of describing the revealed will of God in the Scriptures. "Sanctify them by thy truth," said our Lord: "thy word is truth." The truth itself is the object of complacency to love. Truth is the most glorious thing in the universe, next to God and holiness. It has been the great object of mental pursuit since the creation of the world; millions of minds have travelled in quest of it; philosophers have been so enamoured even with the very term, that they have worshipped it as a mere abstraction. What contentions has it originated, to what systems has it given rise, what dogmatism has it been the occasion of! And yet, after all, apart from revelation, what is it but a name! This gives it reality and form; this tells us where it is, what it is, and how it is to be obtained. Here we learn that the glorious Gospel of the blessed

God, and all the doctrines it includes or implies, is the truth. The question proposed by Pilate to the illustrious prisoner at his bar is answered, and the oracle of heaven has declared that the Scriptures are the truth. And the truth is the object of complacency to charity; the bright star, yea, the full-orbed sun, that enlightens its eye, and points out the resting place of its heart. And it can rejoice in nothing else. Falsehood, and error, and the devices of the human mind, are the objects of its disgust and abhorrence. It is evident, then, as I have already shown, that love differs essentially from that vague kind of charity which is so much cried up at present, both without and within the pale of the church; which scorns to proceed upon the Scripture ground of the truth and its genuine influence; reviling, as narrow-mindedness, and uncharitable party-spirit, all regard to particular doctrines; but which extends its indiscriminate embrace, and pays its idle and unmeaning compliments, to all persons, of whatever denomination or persuasion, presuming that they are all pious and mean well, however much they differ from each other, or from the Scripture, in sentiment or in practice. One of the maxims of this spurious candour, as we have already considered, is, that there is no moral turpitude in mental error; and that every thing is non-essential which does not relate to the interests of morality. How widely this counterfeit liberality differs from the apostolic charity, is evident from the fact which we are now considering, and by which we are told that love delights in the truth. For the truth it will be zealous, as for an object dearer than life itself; to this it would be ready to set the seal of its blood,

and not resign or betray it through fear of the captive's dungeon, or the martyr's stake. This is its joy in life, its support in death: this is the dear companion of its pilgrimage on earth, and its eternal associate in the felicities of heaven.

But as the truth is here opposed to iniquity, the apostle especially intended to state that holiness is the object of love's complacency. Holiness is the natural and appropriate effect of the truth believed. No man can receive the truth in the love of it, without bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God. It is the delight of this pure and heavenly grace to contemplate holiness wherever it is to be found. Ascending to the celestial world, it joins the choirs of the cherubim, to look upon the spotless One, and with them to give utterance to its ecstacies, in the short but sublime anthem, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." Undismayed by the roar of thunder, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words; by the thick darkness, and the vivid lightnings, and the quaking earth, it ventures near the base of Sinai, and, for the delight that it has in holiness, rejoices in the law which is the rule of righteousness. The angels are pleasant to behold, because they are clad in garments of unsullied purity; the crown of glory which Adam wore before his fall was his innocence; and the deep degradation into which he fell by his apostacy, was loss of holiness, in which consisted the image of God. The ceremonial law has an excellence in the eye of charity, because it teaches the value of holiness in the sight of God, and the necessity of it for man. The prophetic visions are all delighted in by it, because they are

distinguished by the beauties of holiness; and the whole Gospel of Jesus is dear to the heart of love, because it is intended to purify unto Christ a church, which he will present to the Father, without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Men are esteemed and loved on earth as they have this moral excellence enstamped upon their souls; and in looking for a heaven which shall satisfy all its desires, it can think of nothing higher and better than a state of sinless purity.

So ardent and so uniform is charity's regard to holiness, that it rejoices in it when it is found in an enemy or a rival. Yes; if we are as much under the influence of this divine virtue as we ought to be, we shall desire, and desire very fervently too, that those who have displeased or injured us may be better than they are. We shall wish to see their conduct freed from every speck of imperfection, and their whole character standing out to the admiration of the world, and receiving the approbation of those by whom they are now condemned. We shall be willing to do any thing by which they may conciliate to themselves the favour of the alienated community and also raise themselves to the vantage ground on which their misconduct has placed us above them. This is charity, to rejoice in, and gaze with gratitude and complacency upon, the moral excellences which invest with loveliness and beauty the character of one that opposes us, although his cause may be thereby promoted, in some degree to the detriment of ours. Men of little virtue may sometimes join from policy in those commendations of another's goodness, the justice of which they cannot dispute, and the harmony of which they cannot disturb; but it is only the Christian, who

is far advanced in the practice of all that is difficult in religion, that can secretly rejoice, without envy or jealousy, in virtues which draw away the public attention from himself, and cause him and his party to pass into eclipse and to sink into shadow. "O Charity! this is thy work, and this thy glory; a work too rarely performed, a glory too rarely seen, in this region of selfishness, in this world of imperfection; where, of the multitudes that profess to submit to thy sway, there are still so few who are really governed by thy laws, and inspired by thine influence."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CANDOUR OF LOVE.

Charity beareth all things.

Some writers consider this seventh verse as an amplification of the foregoing one, and explain it, in reference to the truth, in the following manner: "It beareth all things" revealed by the truth, however opposed to the corruption of human nature, and counts none of them hard sayings or unfit to be borne: "it believeth all things" included in the truth, or all the inferences which the apostles have deduced from it, as being well affected to the source from whence it flows; "hopeth for all things" promised in it; and "endureth all things," or patiently suffers all the afflictions that can attend a steady attachment to it. This gives a very good sense of the words, and admits the full force of these universal expressions. Yet it certainly agrees better with the scope of the apostle to understand the verse with reference to the brethren as the objects of it.

If we render the first expression, which we are now about to consider, as our translators have done, it may signify our bearing one another's burdens and weaknesses, which is to fulfil the law of Christ: and it must

be confessed this is strictly true; for whoever is under the influence of this principle will possess a spirit of tender sympathy. In this world we all groan, being burdened. Each has his own load of care, grief, or imperfection. This is not the state where we are to find perfect rest. How wide is the scope, how frequent the opportunity, how numerous the occasions, for sympathy! And who that is possessed of benevolence, can allow himself to pass a brother upon the road, labouring under a heavier burden than his own, without offering to bear a part? We are not to be impertinently officious and intermeddling, nor to pry into the secrets of our neighbours with an inquisitive curiosity; but to inquire into the cause which gives them so much solicitude or so much grief, is the duty of those who are the witnesses of their careworn countenance and downcast look. What an unfeeling heart must that man have, who can see any form of care and sorrow before him, and never kindly ask the reason of its existence! It is but little that sympathy can do for the sufferer, but that little should be most cheerfully afforded. To be unnoticed and unpitied in our griefs, adds greatly to their weight. For what purpose are Christians collected into churches? not merely to eat the Lord's Supper together: this could be done without any such distinct recognition of a mutual relationship as that which takes place in the fellowship of believers. The end and design of this bond is, that being united as one body, the members may cherish a general sympathy for each other, and exercise their benevolence in the way of mutual assistance. The rich, by their munificence, should help their poorer brethren to bear the burden of poverty; the strong should aid the weak to bear the burden of their

fears and apprehensions; those who are in health and ease should, by seasonable visits, and soothing words, and kind offices, bear the burden of the sick; counsel should always be given when it is sought by those who are in difficulty; and a disposition should pervade the whole body, to render its varied resources, talents, and energies, available for the benefit of the whole. But though this also gives a beautiful meaning, and enjoins a necessary duty, it is not the right view of the passage. It is parallel to that of "enduring," of which the apostle speaks in the latter part of the verse; and it is not probable that it was his intention to express the same thought twice. The word translated "beareth" all things, signifies also "to contain, to conceal, to cover." Adopting the meaning of "concealment" as intended, and the failings of others as the object to which it refers, I shall go on to show in what way it is practised.

To do this with still greater effect, I shall exhibit a general view of those sins to which the view of Christian charity stands exposed; and these are, slander, detraction, and rash judging, or censoriousness.

Perhaps there are no sins which are more frequently alluded to, or more severely rebuked, in Scripture, than those of the tongue; and for this reason, because there are none to which we are so frequently tempted, none we are so prone to indulge, or so bold to excuse, and none which are so fruitful of disorder and discomfort to society. Besides swearing, falsehood, obscenity, and blasphemy, the Scripture speaks of bearing false witness, railing, tale-bearing, whispering, backbiting, slander, and reproach: a dismal enumeration of vices belonging to that member which was intended to be the glory of our

frame. By slander, I understand the circulation of a false report with the intention of injuring a neighbour's reputation. Its most vicious excess is the invention and construction of a story which is absolutely false from beginning to end. Its next lower grade, though little inferior in criminality, is to become the circulator of the tale, knowing it to be false. "This," says Barrow, "is to become the hucksters of counterfeit wares, or factors in this vile trade. There is no coiner who hath not emissaries and accomplices ready to take from his hand and put off his money; and such slanderers at second hand are scarcely less guilty than the first authors. He that breweth lies may have more wit and skill, but the broacher showeth the like malice and wickedness. In this there is no great difference between the great devil that frameth scandalous reports, and the little imps that run about and disperse them." The next operation of slander is to receive and spread, without examining into the truth of them, false and injurious reports. It is a part of a good man's character, that "He taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour;" that is, he does not easily entertain it, much less propagate it; he does not receive it but upon the most convincing evidence; but slander founds reproachful tales upon conjecture or suspicion, and raises an injurious representation upon a suppositious foundation. Sometimes it withers the reputation of a neighbour by rash speaking, or vehemently affirming things which it has no reason to believe, and no motive for affirming, but the hope of exciting ill-will. Slander is sinful, because forbidden in every part of Scripture; cruel, because it is robbing our neighbour of that which is dearer to him than life; and foolish, because it subjects the calumniator himself

to all kinds of inconvenience; for it not only exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of his soul, and the miseries of hell in the world to come, but it makes him odious in the present life, causes him to be shunned and discredited, arms his conscience against his own peace, brings upon himself the most reproachful accusations, and not unfrequently the vengeance of that public justice, which is rightly appointed to be the guardian not only of property and life, but of reputation also.

Detraction, or backbiting, differs a little from slander, though in its general nature and constitution it closely resembles it. Slander involves falsehood: but detraction may speak truth; it is sweetened poison, served from a golden cup by the hand of hypocrisy. A detractor's aim is the same as the slanderer's, to injure the reputation of another; but he avails himself of means that are a little different. He represents persons and actions under the most disadvantageous circumstances he can, setting forth those which may make them appear guilty or ridiculous, and throwing into the shade such as are commendable. "When he cannot deny the metal to be good, and the stamp to be true, he clippeth it, and so rejecteth it from being current; he misconstrues doubtful actions unfavourably, and throws over the very virtues of his neighbours the name of faults, calling the sober sour, the conscientious morose, the devout superstitious, the frugal sordid, the cheerful frivolous, and the reserved crafty; he diminishes from the excellence of good actions, by showing how much better they might have been done; and attempts to destroy all confidence in long established character, and all respect for it, by pitching on some single act of imprudence, and expanding it into a

magnitude, and darkening into a shadow, which truth and justice forbid. Such is the backbiter; whose crime is compounded of the ingredients of ill-humour, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, falsehood, cowardice, and folly." Backbiting must be peculiarly hateful to God: "He is the God of truth, and therefore detesteth lying, of which detraction ever hath a spice: He is the God of justice, and therefore doth especially abhor wronging the best persons and actions: He is the God of love, and therefore cannot but loathe this capital violation of charity: He is jealous of his glory, and therefore cannot endure it to be abused, by slurring his good gifts and graces: He cannot but hate the offence which approacheth to that most heinous and unpardonable sin, which consisteth in defaming the excellent works performed by Divine power and goodness, ascribing them to bad causes."

The same writer, in speaking of the mischief of detraction, as discouraging others from the performance of that goodness which is thus vilified and defamed, has the following beautiful remarks. "Many, seeing the best men thus disparaged, and the best actions vilified, are disheartened and deterred from practising virtue, especially in a conspicuous and eminent degree: 'Why,' will many a man say, 'shall I be strictly good, seeing goodness is so liable to be misused? Had I not better be contented with a mediocrity and obscurity of goodness, than by a glaring lustre thereof to draw the envious eye, and kindle raging obloquy upon me?' And when the credit of virtue is blasted in its practices, many will be diverted from it. So will it grow out of request, and the world be corrupted by these agents of the Evil One. It were advisable, upon this consideration,

not to seem ever to detract, even not then when we are assured, that by speaking ill, we shall not really do it; if we should discover any man to seem worthy, or to be so reputed, whom yet we discern, by standing in a nearer light, not to be truly such, yet wisdom would commonly dictate, and goodness dispose, not to mar his repute. If we should observe, without danger of mistake, any plausible action to be performed out of bad inclinations, principles, or designs; yet ordinarily, in discretion and honesty, we should let it pass with such condemnation as its appearance may procure, rather than slur it by venting our disadvantageous apprehensions about it; for it is no great harm that any man should enjoy undeserved commendation; our granting its claims is but being over just, which if it ever be fault, can hardly be so in this case, wherein we do not expend any cost or suffer any damage: but it may do mischief to blemish any appearance of virtue; it may be a wrong thereto, to deface its very image; the very disclosing of hypocrisy doth inflict a wound on goodness, and exposeth it to scandal, for bad men will then be prone to infer that all virtue doth proceed from the like bad principles; so the disgrace cast on that which is spurious, will redound to the prejudice of that which is most genuine. And if it be good to forbear detracting from that which is certainly false, much more so in regard to that which is possibly true; and far more still is it so in respect to that which is clear and sure."

Censoriousness is another sin of the same class, another child of the same family: varying, however, from those I have already considered by acting not so much in the way of reporting faults as in condemning

them too severely. It is different from slander, inasmuch as we assume that what it condemns is true; and from detraction, inasmuch as it is not exercised with an intention to injure another in public estimation, but only to reprove him for what is wrong. It assumes the character, not of a witness, but of a judge: hence the injunction, "Judge not." Censoriousness, then, means a disposition to scrutinize men's motives, to pass sentence upon their conduct, to reproach their faults, accompanied by an unwillingness to make all reasonable allowances for their mistakes, and a tendency to the side of severity rather than to that of leniency. We are not to suppose that all inspection and condemnation of the conduct of others is sin; nor that all reproof of offenders is a violation of the law of charity; nor imagine that we are to think well of our neighbours, in opposition to the plainest evidence; nor that we are to entertain such a credulous opinion of the excellence of mankind, as unsuspectingly to confide in every man's pretences: but what is wrong is needlessly inquiring into the conduct and motives of other men; examining and arraigning them at our bar, when we stand in no relation to them that requires such a scrutiny; delivering our opinion when it is not called for; pronouncing sentence with undue severity; and heaping the heaviest degree of reproach upon an offender which we can find language to express.

"The world has become so extremely critical and censorious, that in many places the chief employment of men, and the main body of conversation is, if we mark it, taken up in judging; every company is a court of justice, every seat becometh a tribunal, at every table standeth a bar, whereunto all men are cited,

whereat every man, as it happeneth, is arraigned and sentenced: no sublimity or sacredness of dignity, no integrity or innocence of life, no prudence or circumspection of demeanour, can exempt any person from it. Not one escapes being taxed under some odious name, or scandalous character or other. Not only the outward actions and visible practices of men are judged, but their retired sentiments are brought under review, their inward dispositions have a verdict passed upon them, their final states are determined. Whole bodies of men are thus judged at once; and nothing is it in one breath to damn whole churches, at one push to throw down whole nations into the bottomless pit; yea, God himself is hardly spared, his providence coming under the bold obloquy of those who, as the Psalmist speaketh of some in his time, whose race does yet survive, "'speak loftily, and set their mouth against the heavens.'" Barrow, in order to censure this temper, gives the following qualifications of a judge. He should be appointed by competent authority, and not intrude himself into office. To how many censors may we say, "Who made thee a judge?" He should be free from all prejudice and partiality. Is this the case with the censorious? He should never proceed to judgment, without a careful examination of the case, so as well to understand it. Let the private self-appointed judges remember this, and act upon the principle of Solomon, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame to him." He should never pronounce sentence but upon good grounds, after certain proof and full conviction. If this rule were observed, how many censures would be prevented! He will not meddle with causes beyond the

jurisdiction of his court. If this were recollected and acted upon, the voice of unlawful censure would die away in silence; for who are we, that we should try the hearts and search the reins of men, or judge another's servant? He never proceeds against any man, without citing him to appear, either in person or by his representative, and giving him an opportunity to defend himself. When any one is censured in company, there should always be found some generous mind, to propose that the accused should be sent for, and the trial put off till he appear. He must pronounce, not according to private fancy, but to public and established laws. Is this the rule of the censorious? Is it not rather their custom to make their own private opinion the law. He should be a person of great knowledge and ability. What is the usual character of the private censors of human conduct? Are they not persons of great ignorance and few ideas, who, for want of something else to say, or ability to say it, talk of their neighbours' faults; a topic on which a child or a fool can be fluent? He is not an accuser; and moreover is, by virtue of his office, counsel for the accused. On the contrary, the censorious are generally not only judges but accusers, and counsel against the culprits whom they have brought to the bar. He should lean, as far as the public good will allow, to the side of mercy; but mercy has no place in the bosom of the censorious, and their very justice is cruelty and oppression. He must himself be innocent. Why is there not a voice heard in every company, when the prisoner is arraigned, and the process of judgment begins, saying, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone?" He proceeds with solemnity, and grief, and slowness, to pass the sen-

tence. But what indecent haste and levity, not excepting joy, do we witness in those who are given to the practice of censuring their neighbours' conduct."*

Now, to all these sinful practices, Christian love stands directly opposed. It is a long time before it allows itself to see the faults of others. Not more quick is instinct in the bird, beast, or fish of prey, to discover its victim, than the detractor and the censorious are to descry imperfections as soon as they appear in the conduct of those around them. Their vision is quite telescopic, to see objects of this kind at a distance, and they have a microscopic power of inspection, to examine those that are small and near; when looking at faults, they always employ the highest magnifying power which their instruments admits of: and for the purpose of looking at spots which to the naked eye would be lost amidst surrounding glory, they carry a darkened glass. They do not want to see virtues: no; all that is fair, good, and lovely, is passed over in quest of deformity and evil. But all this is utterly abhorrent to the nature of love, which, intent upon the well-being of mankind, and anxious for their happiness, is ever looking out for signs that the sum of human felicity is increasing. The eye of the Christian philanthropist is so busily employed in searching for excellence, and so fixed and so ravished by it when it is found, that it is sure to pass over many things of a contrary nature, as not included in the object of its inquiry: just as he who is searching for gems is likely to pass by many common stones unheeded; or as he who is looking for a particular star or constellation in the heavens, is not likely to see the tapers which are near him upon earth.

* Dr Barrow's Sermons.

Good men are his delight; and to come at these, very many of the evil generation are passed by; and there is also a singular power of abstraction in his benevolence, to separate, when looking at a mixed character, the good from the evil, and, losing sight of the latter, to concentrate its observation on the former.

And when love is obliged to admit the existence of imperfections, it diminishes as much as possible their magnitude, and hides them as much as is lawful from its own notice. It takes no delight in looking at them, finds no pleasure in keeping them before its attention, and poring over them; but turns away from them as an unpleasant object, as delicate taste would from whatever is offensive. If we find an affinity between our thoughts and sins of which we are the spectators, it is a plain proof that our benevolence is of a very doubtful nature, or in a feeble state; on the contrary, if we involuntarily turn away our eyes from beholding evil, and are conscious to ourselves of a strong revulsion, and an acute distress, when we cannot altogether retire from the view of it, we possess an evidence that we know much of that virtue which covers all things. If we are as much under the influence of love as we ought to be, we shall make all reasonable allowances for those things which are wrong in the conduct of our neighbour; we shall, as I have already said, not be forward to suspect evil, but shall do everything to lessen the heinousness of an action. This is what is meant when it is said that "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." "Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covers all sins."

It is the wish and the act of love to conceal from the public all the faults which the good of the offender, and the ends of public justice, do not require to be

disclosed. There are cases, in which to conceal offences, whatever kindness it may be to one, would be unkindness to many. If a person living in sin, has so far imposed upon a minister, as to be proposed for admission to the fellowship of the church, it is the bounden duty of any individual who knows the real character of the candidate, to make it known to the pastor; and the same disclosure should be made in reference to a person already in communion, who is actually living in sin: concealment in these cases is an injury to the whole body of Christians. If a person is likely to be injured in his temporal concerns by reposing confidence in one who is utterly unworthy of it, it is the duty of those who are acquainted with the snare to warn the destined victim of his danger. If any are so far regardless of the peace of society and the laws of the country, as to be engaged in great crimes against both, concealment on the part of those who are aware of the existence of such practices, is a participation in the crime. For as love should be universal, as well as particular, it should never be exercised towards individuals in opposition to the interests of the community.

But where no other interest is concerned, where no claims demand a disclosure, where no injury is done by concealment, and no benefit is conferred by giving publicity to a fault; there our duty is to cover it over with the veil of secrecy, and maintain an unbroken silence upon the subject.

Instead of this friendly and amiable reserve, how different is the way in which many act! No sooner have they heard of the commission of a fault, than they set off with the intelligence, as gladly as if they bore the tidings of a victory, proclaiming the melancholy

fact with strange delight in every company, and almost to every individual they meet; and as there is a greedy appetite for scandal, they find many ears as open to listen to the tale, as their lips are to tell it: or perhaps they relate the matter as a secret, extorting a promise from those to whom they communicate it, that they will never mention it again. But if it be not proper to publish it to the world, why do they speak of it at all? If it be proper for publicity, why lock up others in silence? Sometimes the act of telling faults in secret is a pitiable kind of weakness, an utter impossibility of keeping any thing in the mind, accompanied by an intention of publishing it only to a single person; but in other persons it is a wish to have the gratification of being the first to communicate the report to a large number; each is made to promise that he will not disclose it, that the original reporter may not be anticipated as he pursues his round, and thus have his delight diminished, in being every where the first to tell the bad news.

Then there are some, who publish the faults of others under the hypocritical pretence of lamenting over them, and cautioning others against committing the same offence. You will see them in company putting on a grave countenance, and hear them asking the person who sits near them, but with a voice loud enough to reach every corner of the room, whether he has heard the report of Mr. Such-an-one's conduct; and when every ear is caught, every tongue silent, and every eye fixed, he will proceed in a strain of deep lamentation, and tender commiseration, to bewail the misconduct of the delinquent, seasoning the narration of the offence, as he goes through all its

circumstances and all its aggravations, with many expressions of pity for the offender, and many words of caution to the company. Thus, under the hypocritical guise of pity and the abhorrence of sin, has he indulged in this mischievous yet too common propensity, to publish the failings of some erring brother. Has he mentioned the subject to the individual himself? If not, if he has withheld this mode of expressing his pity, what avails his public commiseration? What possible sympathy with the offender can it be, to placard him in public, and blazon his faults in company?

Some there are, who suppose that there is little harm in talking, in their own particular circles, of the failings of their neighbours: they would not speak of such things before strangers, or society in general; but they feel no scruple in making them matter of conversation among their select friends. But these friends may not all be prudent: and if it be desirable that the fact should not be known without the circle, the best way is, that it be not known within it. Where there is no benefit likely to be obtained by publicity, it is best, in reference to character, to lock up the secret in our own mind, and literally to observe the injunction of the prophet, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom."

Love not only will not originate, but will not help to circulate an evil report. When the tale comes to her, there, at least in that direction, it stops. There are gossips, who, though they would shudder at slander, and, perhaps, would not be the first to give publicity to an idle report of another, yet feel no scruple in telling what many already know. "It is no secret," they say,

"else I would not mention it." But we should not do even this: we should neither invent, originate, nor propagate an evil report. While every tongue is voluble in spreading bad tidings, charity will be silent; while all seem anxious to enjoy communion in backbiting and censoriousness, and to sip the cup of detraction as it passes round the company, she says to the person who has told the story, "I have no ears for defamation, or even for the tale of another's faults. Go, and affectionately speak with the individual of his failings, but do not talk of them in public." If all men acted on these principles, slander would die upon the lips which gave it birth; tale-bearers would cease for want of customers to carry on their trade as pedlars in detraction; backbiting would go out of fashion; and the love of scandal be starved for the want of food.

The evils then to which love is opposed, are, calumny, which invents a slanderous report to injure the reputation of another; detraction, which magnifies a fault; censoriousness, which is too officious and too rigid in condemning it; tale-bearing, which propagates it; curiosity which desires to know it; malignity, which takes delight in it. Of this list of vices, calumny is of course the worst; but a tattling disposition, though it may have little of the malignity of slander, is a servant to do its work, and a tool to perpetrate its mischief. Persons of this description are far too numerous. They are to be found in every town, in every village, yes, and in every church. They are not the authors of libels, but they are the publishers; they do not draw up the placard, but only paste it up in all parts of the town; and are amenable, not for the malice which invented the defamatory lie, but for the mischief

of circulating it. Their minds are a kind of common sewer, into which all the filthy streams of scandal are perpetually flowing; a receptacle for whatever is offensive and noxious. Such gossips might be pitied for their weakness, if they were not still more to be dreaded for the injury they do. They are not malignants, but they are mischief-makers; and, as such, should be shunned and dreaded. Every door should be closed against them, or at least, every ear. They should be made to feel that, if silence be a penance to them, their idle and injurious tales are much more afflictive to their neighbours. Now, such persons would not only be rendered more safe, but more dignified by charity: this heavenly virtue, by destroying their propensity to gossiping, would rescue them from reproach, and confer upon them an elevation of character to which they were strangers before. It would turn their activity into a new channel, and make them as anxious to promote the peace of society, as they were before to disturb it by the din of their idle and voluble tongues. They would perceive that no man's happiness can be promoted by the publication of his faults; for if he be penitent, to make his failings the butt of ridicule, is like pouring nitre and vinegar upon the deep wounds of a troubled mind; and if he be not, the exposure will do harm, by producing irritation, and thus placing him further off from true contrition.

If it be essential to charity to feel a disposition to cover the faults which we witness, and to treat with tenderness and delicacy the offender, it is quite distressing to consider how little there is of it in the world. How much need have we to labour for an increase of it ourselves, and to diffuse it both by our influence and

example, that the harmony of society may not be so frequently interrupted by the lies of the slanderer, the exaggerations of the detractor, the harsh judgments of the censorious, and the idle gossip of the tale-bearer.

"Charity believeth all things."

Nearly allied to the property we have just considered, and an essential part of candour, is that which follows; "Charity believeth all things;" i.e., not all things contained in the Word of God, for faith in divine testimony is not here the subject treated of, but all things which are testified concerning our brethren: not, however, such as are testified to their disadvantage, but in their favour. This property or operation of love is so involved, and has been to such an extent illustrated, in what I have already said, that it cannot be necessary to enlarge upon the subject again. As charity regards with benevolent desire the well-being of all, it must feel naturally disposed to believe whatever can be stated in their favour. Tell a fond mother of the faults of her child; does she immediately and entirely believe the testimony? No. You will perceive an aspect of unbelief on her countenance: you will hear inquiries and insinuations from her lips: and after the clearest evidence has been adduced in support of the testimony, you will still discern that she believes you not. But, on the contrary, carry to her a report of her child's good conduct, tell her of his achievements in wisdom or in virtue, and you see at once the look of assent, the smile of approbation, hear the language of conviction, and in some cases

witness a degree of confidence which amounts to weakness. How can we account for this? On the principle of the apostle, that "love believeth all things:" the mother loves her child; she is sincerely anxious for his well-being; and as our wishes have an influence upon our convictions, she is forward to believe what is said to her child's honour, and backward to believe what is said to his discredit.

Here, then, is one of the brightest displays of charity, as exhibited in the man who believes all things which are related to the advantage of others. He hears the report with unfeigned pleasure, listens with the smile of approbation, the nod of assent; he does not turn to the subject of human depravity, to find ground and reason for discrediting the fact, nor does he search with inquisitive eye for some flaw in the evidence, to impeach the veracity of the testimony; he does not cautiously hold his judgment in abeyance, as if afraid of believing too well of his neighbour; but if the evidence amount to probability, he is ready to believe the account, and delights to find another and another instance of human excellence, by which he may be more reconciled and attached to the family of man, and by which he discovers that there is more goodness and happiness on earth, than he knew of before.

The strongest proof and power of love, in this mode of its operation, is its disposition to believe all good reports of an enemy or a rival. Many persons can believe nothing good, but every thing bad, of those whom they consider in this light. Let them have once conceived a prejudice or dislike: let them only have been injured or offended, opposed or humbled, by any one, and from that moment their ears are closed against

every word to his credit, and open to every tale that may tend to his disgrace. Prejudice has neither eyes nor ears for good; but is all eye and ear for evil. Its influence on the judgment is prodigious: its bewildering operation upon our convictions is really most surprising and frightful. In many cases it gives up evidence as bright, clear, and steady, as the meridian splendour of the sun, to follow that which is dim and delusive as the feeble light of an ignis fatuus. How tremblingly anxious should we be to keep the mind free from this misleading influence! How careful to obtain that candid, impartial, discriminating judgment, which can distinguish things that differ, and approve of things that are excellent, even in reference to persons that are in some respects opposed to us! This is candour; and a more important disposition of the kind we can scarcely imagine. Through that great law of our nature, which we call the association of ideas, we are too apt, when we have discovered one thing wrong in the character or conduct of another, to connect him with nothing but wrong, and that continually; we scarcely ever think of him or repeat his name, but under the malign influence of this unhappy association. What we need is more of the power by which we can view the general character apart from the occasional act, and recognize good qualities when united with bad ones, and still believe in the good, notwithstanding what we know of the bad.

As in accordance with the principles of revelation, the testimony of our senses, and the evidence of experience, we believe that there is none so perfect in the view of God as to be destitute of all flaws, we should at the same time believe that, so far as mere

general excellence goes, there are few so bad as to be destitute of all approvable traits. It is the business of candour to examine, report, and believe with impartiality; and candour is one of the operations of love. This heavenly disposition forbids the prejudice which is generated by differences on the subject of religion, and enables its possessor to discredit surmises of evil, and to believe any favourable testimony borne to those of other denominations, or of other congregations. All excellence belongs not to our party and all evil is not to be found in those who do not belong to it; yet how prepared are many persons to believe nothing good, and every thing bad, of other sects or societies! Away, away, with this detestable spirit! cast it out of the church of the living God! Like the legion spirit which possessed the man who dwelt among the tombs, and made him a torment to himself, and a terror to others, this demon of prejudice has too long possessed, torn, and enfuriated, even the body of the church. "Spirit of love! descend and expel the infernal usurper. Cast out this spoiler of our beauty, this disturber of our peace, this opponent of our communion, this destroyer of our honour. Before thy powerful, yet gentle sway, let prejudice retire, and prepare us to believe all things that are reported to us to the credit of others, be they of our party or not, whether they have offended us or not, and whether in past times they have done evil or good."

"Charity hopeth all things."

Hope also, is here enjoined, with reference not to what God in his word has promised to them that love

him, but to our estimate of the acts, intentions, and characters of our neighbours. In a report of a doubtful matter, where the evidence is apparently against any person, love will still hope that something may yet turn out to his advantage; and that some light will yet be thrown on the darker features of the case, which will set the matter in a more favourable point of view: it will not give full credit to doubtful appearances, however indicative they may seem to be of evil, but will hope, almost against hope, for the best.

If the action itself cannot be defended, then love will hope that the motive was not bad; that the intention in the mind of the actor was not so evil as the deed appeared to the eye of the spectator; that ignorance, not malice, was the cause of the offence; and that the time will come when this will be apparent.

Love does not speedily abandon an offender in despondency; does not immediately give him up as incorrigible, or soon cease to employ the means necessary for his reformation; but is willing to expect that he may yet repent and improve, however discouraging present appearances may be. Hope is the main spring of exertion; and as love means a desire for the well-being of others, it will not soon let go that hope, in the absence of which all its efforts must be paralysed.

There are reasons which make it wise, as well as kind, to believe and hope all things for the best. Presumptive evidence, however strong, is often fallacious. Many circumstances in the case may look very suspicious, and yet the after discovery of some little event may alter the aspect of the whole affair, and make the innocence of the accused far more apparent than his guilt seemed before. The various instances in which

we have ourselves been deceived by appearances, and have been led by defective, though at the same time, convincing evidence, should certainly teach us caution in listening to evil reports, and dispose us to believe and hope all things.

When we consider, also, how common is slander, detraction, and tale-bearing, we should not be hasty in forming an unfavourable opinion; nor should we forget the anxiety which is often manifested by each party engaged in a contention to gain our alliance to their cause, by being first to report the matter, and to produce an impression favourable to themselves. Solomon has given us a proverb, the truth of which we have seen proved in a thousand instances, and which, notwithstanding, we are continually forgetting; "He that is first in his own cause, seemeth to be just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out." It is a proof of great weakness so to give our ear to the first reporter as to close it against the other party; and yet we are all prone to do this. A plausible tale produces an impression which no subsequent testimony, though attended with far clearer evidence of truth than the first statement, can effectually obliterate. We know that every case has two aspects; we have all been experimentally acquainted with the folly of deciding till we have heard both sides; and yet, in opposition to our reason and to our experience, we are apt to take up a prejudice upon ex-parte statements. Another circumstance, by which we are in danger of being misled in our opinion of our neighbour's conduct, is the mischievous propensity of many persons to exaggerate every thing they relate. Whatever be the cause of fondness for the marvellous, and delight in exciting surprise, the existence and pre-

valence of these habits of mind are unquestionable. Perhaps we all like to relate what is new, strange, and interesting; not excepting even bad news. To such a pitch is this carried by those who are deeply infected with the propensity, that they never tell any thing as they hear it; every fact is embellished or magnified. If a neighbour has displayed a little warmth of temper, they saw him raging like a fury; if he was a little cheerful after dinner, he had been tippling; if he was incorrect, they protest that he committed palpable falsehood, if not perjury; if he had not been so generous in his transactions as could be wished, he was an extortioner, and devoid of common honesty. Nothing is moderate and sober in the hands of such persons; every thing is extravagant or extraordinary. All they meet with is in the form of adventure. Out of the least incident they can construct a tale; and on a small basis of truth, raise a mighty superstructure of fiction to interest and impress every company into which they come. Undeterred by the presence of the person from whom they received their information, they will not scruple to go on magnifying and embellishing, till the author can scarcely recognise his own narrative. How strange it seems, that such people should either not know, or not remember, that all this while they are telling falsehoods! They do not seem to understand, that if we relate a circumstance in such a manner as is calculated to give an impression which, either in nature or degree, does not accord with reality, we are guilty of the sin of lying. Where character is concerned, the sin is still greater, since it adds detraction to falsehood. Many a man's reputation has been frittered away by this wicked and mischievous propensity. Every nar-

rator of an instance of misconduct, not, perhaps, particularly heinous in itself, has added something to the tale, till the offender stood before the public eye, so blackened by the accumulated slander, that for a while he lost his character, and only partially recovered it in the end, and that with extreme difficulty. Remembering the prevalence of this evil habit, we should be backward to take up an unfavourable opinion upon first appearances, and, until the most convincing proof, be willing to hope the best: such is the dictate of charity, and such the conduct of those who yield their hearts to its influence.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SELF-DENIAL OF LOVE.

Love endureth all things.

Charity is not fickle, unsteady, and easily discouraged; not soon disheartened, or induced to relinquish its object; but persevering, patient, and self-denying in the pursuance of its design to relieve the wants, assuage the sorrows, reform the vices, and allay the animosities, of all around it. It is as patient in bearing, as it is active in doing; uniting the uncomplaining submission of the lamb, the plodding perseverance of the ox, and the courage of the lion. It is no frivolous and volatile affection, relinquishing its object from a mere love of change; nor is it a feeble virtue, which weakly lets go its purpose in the prospect of difficulty; nor a cowardly grace, which drops its scheme, and flees from the face of danger; no, it is the union of benevolence with strength, patience, courage, and perseverance. It has feminine beauty, gentleness, and sweetness, united with masculine energy, power, and heroism. To do good, it will meekly bear with the infirmities of the meanest, or brave the scorn and fury of the mightiest. But let us survey the opposition, the difficulties, the discouragements, and the provocations,

which it has to bear, and which, with enduring patience, it can resist.

Sacrifices of ease, time, feeling, and property, must all be endured; for it is impossible to exercise Christian charity without making these. He that would do good to others without practising self-denial, does but dream. The way of philanthropy is ever up hill, and not unfrequently over rugged rocks, and through thorny paths. If we would promote the happiness of our fellow creatures, it must be by parting with something or other that is dear to us. If we would lay aside revenge when they have injured us, and exercise forgiveness, we must often mortify our own feelings. If we would reconcile the differences of those who are at variance, we must give up our time, and sometimes our comfort. If we would assuage their griefs, we must expend our property. If we would reform their wickedness, we must sacrifice our own ease. If we would, in short, do good of any kind, we must be willing to deny ourselves, and bear labour of body and pain of mind. And love is willing to do this; it braces itself for labour, arms itself for conflict, prepares itself for suffering; it looks difficulties in the face, counts the cost, and heroically exclaims, "None of these things move me, so that I may diminish the evils, and promote the happiness of others." It will rise before the break of day, linger on the field of labour till midnight, toil amidst the sultry heat of summer, brave the northern blasts of winter, submit to derision, and give the energies of body and the comfort of mind, all to do good.

Misconstruction is another thing that love endures. Some men's minds are ignorant, and cannot understand

its schemes; others are contracted, and cannot comprehend them; others are selfish, and cannot approve them; others are envious, and cannot applaud them; and all these will unite, either to suspect or to condemn it; but this virtue, "like the eagle, pursues its noble, lofty, heaven-bound course, regardless of the flock of little pecking, cavilling birds, which, unable to follow, amuse themselves by twittering their objections and ill-will in the hedges below." Or to borrow a Scriptural allusion, love, like its great Pattern when he was upon the earth, goes about doing good, notwithstanding the malignant perversion of its motives and actions on the part of its enemies. "I must do good," she exclaims: "if you cannot understand my plans, I pity your ignorance; if you misconstrue my motives, I forgive your malignity; but the clouds that are exhaled from the earth may as well attempt to arrest the career of the sun, as for your dulness or malevolence to stop my attempts to do good. I must go on, without your approbation, and against your opposition."

Envy often tries the patience of love, and is another of the ills which it bears, without being turned aside by it. There are men who would enjoy the praise of benevolence, without enduring its labours; that is, they would wear the laurel of victory without exposing themselves to the peril of war: they are sure to envy the braver, nobler spirits, whose generous conquests having been preceded by labour, are followed by praise. To be good and to do good, are alike the objects of envy with many persons. "A man of great merit," says a French author, "is a kind of public enemy. By engrossing applause, which would serve to gratify a great many others, he cannot but be envied: men naturally

hate what they highly esteem, yet cannot love." The feeling of the countryman at Athens, who upon being asked why he gave his vote for the banishment of Aristides, replied, "Because he is every where called the just," is by no means uncommon. The Ephesians expelled the best of their citizens, with the public announcement of this reason, "If any are determined to excel their neighbours, let them find another place to do it." Envy is that which love hates and proscribes; and in revenge, envy hates and persecutes love in return: but the terror of envy does not intimidate love, nor its malignity disgust it; it can bear even the perversions, misrepresentations, and opposition of this fiend-like passion, and pursues its course, simply saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Ingratitude is often the hard usage which love has to sustain, and which it patiently endures. Into such a state of turpitude is man fallen, that he would bear any weight rather than that of obligation. Men will acknowledge small obligations, but often return malice for such as are extraordinary; and some will sooner forgive great injuries than great services. Many persons do not know their benefactors, many more will not acknowledge them, and others will not reward them, even with the cheap offering of thanks. These things are enough to make us sick of the world; yes, but they ought not to make us weary of trying to mend it: for the more ungrateful it is, the more it needs our benevolence. Here is the noble, lofty, and god-like temper of charity; it pursues its course like the providence of Jehovah, which continues to cause its sun to rise, and its rain to descend, not only upon the irrational creatures, who have no capacity to know their bene-

factor, but upon the rational ones, many of whom have no disposition to acknowledge him.

Derision is often employed to oppose the efforts of love, by all the artillery of scorn. Spiritual religion, and especially that view of it which this subject exhibits, has ever been an object of contempt to ungodly men. Banter and ridicule are brought to stop its progress: the greatest profaneness and buffoonery are sometimes employed to laugh it out of countenance: but it has learnt to treat with indifference even the cruel mockings of irony, and to receive upon its shield-arm all the arrows of the most envenomed wit.

Opposition does not disgust, nor persevering obstinacy weary it. It can endure to have its schemes examined and sifted by those who cannot understand them, cavilled at by those who cannot mend them, and resisted by those who have nothing to offer in their place. It does not throw all up in a fit of passion, not suffer the tongue of petulance, nor the clamour of envy, to stop its efforts.

Want of success, that most discouraging consideration to activity, is not sufficient to drive it from the field; but in the expectation of the future harvest, it continues to plough and to sow in hope. Its object is too important to be relinquished for a few failures; and nothing but the demonstration of absolute impossibility can induce it to give up its benevolent purpose.

If instances of this view of Christian love are necessary to illustrate and enforce it by the power of example, many and striking ones are at hand. Few, very few, are worthy of being put in competition with that of Mr Clarkson, whose illustrious name, and that of his no less illustrious coadjutor, Mr Wilberforce, will ever be pro-

nounced with tears of gratitude by Africa, as the chief agents in the work of inducing the greatest commercial nation upon earth to abolish the infernal traffic in human beings; and ought to be recorded in letters of gold by their grateful countrymen, for having delivered the nation from the greatest crime which, in her modern history, she ever committed, and from the greatest curse which she could dread at the hands of retributive justice. Perhaps no uninspired book may be so fairly regarded as a beautiful comment on the expression, "Charity endureth all things," as Clarkson's "History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade." Twenty years of that good man's life were occupied in long and fatiguing journeys, at all seasons of the year; in labours of an almost incredible extent, to trace reports to their source, to collect information, and to gather evidence; in braving opposition, bearing all kinds of ridicule, encountering savages, whose trade had made them reckless of crime and thirsty for blood; in personal exposure so great, that by nothing less than supernatural strength granted for the occasion, could he have been rescued at one time from threatened and intended death. Nor was this the extent of his endurance: disappointment, the most bitter and discouraging, often extinguished his brighest hopes; lukewarmness on the part of those from whom he had a right to expect the most zealous co-operation, often saddened his heart, though it never paralyzed his zeal; and to try his perseverance, and put his benevolence to the severest test, his cause was of a nature which, by the sufferings it brought under review, was enough to sicken and turn from its purpose a compassion of less hardihood than his. What must that man have had to endure who thus describes his feelings

after the details of evidence furnished by only one of the thousands of days spent in familiarizing himself with the various details of the greatest outrage ever committed against the rights of humanity? "The different scenes of barbarity which these represented to me greatly added to the affliction of my mind. My feelings became now almost insupportable. I was agonized to think that this trade should last another day: I was in a state of agitation from morning till night: I determined I would soon leave the place in which I saw nothing but misery. I had collected now, I believe, all the evidence it would afford; and to stay a day longer in it than was necessary would be only an interruption to my happiness and health."

Who but a Christian philanthropist of the highest order could have pursued such a career, year after year, and not have been so wearied by labour, so disheartened by opposition, so disgusted by cruelty, as to abandon the object of his pursuit? Here was, indeed, a beautiful illustration of the "love that endureth all things."

But a greater than Clarkson might be mentioned. Let the history of St. Paul be studied, and his suffering career be traced, and his declarations heard concerning his varied and heavy tribulations. "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong: ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffetted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we

suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Nor did these sufferings come upon him without his being previously apprized of them, for the Holy Ghost had witnessed to him that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Yet neither the prospect of his varied tribulations, nor the full weight of them, made him for a moment think of relinquishing his benevolent exertions for the welfare of mankind. His was the love that "endureth all things."

And a greater, far greater, than even the great apostle of the Gentiles, might be also introduced, as affording by his conduct a most striking illustration of this property of Christian charity. Who but himself can conceive of what the Son of God endured while he sojourned in this world? Who can imagine the magnitude of his sufferings, and the extent of the opposition, ingratitude, and hard usage, amidst which those sufferings were sustained, and by which they were

so greatly increased? Never was so much mercy treated with so much cruelty: the constant labour he sustained, and the many privations to which he submitted, were little, compared with the malignant contradiction resistance and persecution which he received from those who were the objects of his mercy. The work of man's redemption was not accomplished, as was the work of creation, by a mere fiat delivered from the throne on which Omnipotence reigned in the calm repose of infinite majesty: no; the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, as a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. The wrath of God, the fury of devils, the rage of man, the malignity of enemies, the wayward follies and fickleness of friends, the baseness of treachery, the scornfulness of official rank, and the many stings of ingratitude, calumny, and inconstancy, all poured their venom into that heart which glowed with affection to the children of men. Nothing turned him from his purpose, nothing abated his ardour in the work of our salvation. His, too, and above all others, was indeed a love which "endureth all things."

Such is the model we are to copy. In doing good we must prepare ourselves for opposition, and all its attendant train of evils. Whether our object be the conversion of souls, or the well-being of man's corporeal nature; whether we are seeking to build up the temporal, or to establish the eternal interests of mankind, we must remember that we have undertaken a task which calls for patient, self-denying, and persevering effort. In the midst of difficulties, we must not utter the vain and cowardly wish that we had not set our hand to the plough; but press onward in humble dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, and

animated by the hope of either being rewarded by success, or by the consciousness that we have done every thing to obtain it: and we shall do this, if we possess much of the power of love; for its ardour is such, that many waters cannot quench it. Its energies increase with the difficulty that requires them; and like a well-constructed arch, it becomes more firm and consolidated by the weight it has to sustain. In short, it is "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as it knows that its labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ETERNAL NATURE OF LOVE.

Charity never faileth.

Permanence is the climax of excellence. How often has the sigh been heaved, and the tear been shed, over the perishable nature of earthly possessions. Their transient duration presented a painful contrast to their great worth, and extorted the sorrowful exclamation, Alas! that such excellence should be mortal! The charm of beauty soon fades, the force of genius is at length exhausted, the monuments of art decay; an incurable taint of corruption has infected every thing earthly, and even religion itself does not confer immortality upon every thing that belongs to its sacred economy. One thing there is, which shall remain for ever, for "charity never faileth;" and its permanence is the crown and glory of all its other noble qualities. It is a truly immortal disposition, bearing no exclusive relation to earth or to time, but destined to pass from the world to dwell in heaven, and flourish through eternity with the souls in which it exists.

When it is said that it never fails, we are not merely to understand, that being once planted in the soul, it remains there as the centre and support of all

the other practical virtues: that it will so remain, is unquestionable; for its continuance is essential to the existence of personal and social religion. A man may change his opinions on some subjects, he may give up some sentiments once believed by him to be truth; but he cannot give up love, without ceasing to be a Christian.

Nor does the apostle mean that it remains as the spirit of Christianity till the end of time, amidst every change of external administration. That it shall so abide is unquestionable. The genius of piety is unchangeable. This was the disposition prescribed to the primitive Christian; it is prescribed to us; and it will be no less so to every future generation. A holier and happier age is in reserve for the church of Christ; "compared with which, invisible though it be at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has yet shone upon the world is midnight, and the highest splendours that have invested it, the shadow of death;" but this glory will consist in a more perfect and conspicuous manifestation of the grace of love. It is in this, combined with a clearer perception of the truth, that the Christians of the millennium will surpass those of every preceding age.

But the apostle's reference is evidently to another world: his eye was upon heaven, and he was looking at the things unseen and eternal, when he said that "charity never faileth." He was then soaring on the wings of faith, and exploring the scenes of eternity, and he saw this celestial plant surviving the dissolution of the universe, outliving the earthly state of the church, transplanted into the paradise of God, and

flourishing in the spirits of just men made perfect, near the fountain of light and love.

To give still greater emphasis to what he says of its continuance, he contrasts it with some things, which, however highly valued by the Corinthian believers, were of a transient duration, and therefore of greatly inferior value to this.

"Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." By prophecies here, we are to understand inspired interpretations of the Scriptures; and new revelations from God, by oral or written communication, for the instruction and edification of the saints. These, so far from belonging to the heavenly state of the church, did not survive its primitive ages. The gift of inspiration was soon withdrawn, the oracle of prophecy was hushed, and all further responses from heaven were denied.

"Whether there be tongues, they shall cease." This, of course, refers to the miraculous power of speaking any language without previous study. This gift also ceased with the extraordinary endowments of the primitive ages, and bears no relation to the heavenly world. Whether the communication of ideas in the celestial state will be carried on by speech, is at present unknown to us; if it be so, what the language will be is beyond conjecture.

"Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." This expression most probably refers to what is called, in the preceding chapter, "the word of knowledge;" and of which the apostle speaks in the beginning of this chapter, "Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing." It means an inspired knowledge of the types, predictions,

and mysteries of the Old Testament, and of their accomplishment by the facts of the Christian economy. This, also, was among the signs and wonders which were to vanish away; which, having been granted as attestations to the divine authority of the Word of God, and for the edification of the church, were discontinued when the canon of Scripture was completed.

Some extend the apostle's reasoning so far as to include every kind of our present knowledge; which, as to its imperfect attainments, and inadequate mediums of communication, will be removed, and give place to a more easy and perfect method of acquiring truth, and a more entire comprehension of its nature and relations.

As to the knowledge of the arts, of the practical sciences, and of literature, this will be lost and forgotten, as utterly useless, and as bearing no relation whatever to the celestial state. Ye master spirits, ye commanding geniuses, ye lordly minds, who exhaust the force of your intellect, and lavish its reasoning upon themes of mere earthly interest, see here the termination of all your labours. Scholars, poets, painters, sculptors, warriors, ye who assemble in the temple of fame, amidst the mightiest productions of human skill, to pay homage to each other, to receive the admiration of the world, and to immortalize your names, I give to your mighty works the full measure of their value, in reference to earth and to time; I admit that, in this view, they are bright ornaments to the history of man; yet still in reference to heaven and to eternity, they are nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Not an angel would turn to gaze upon the noblest production of human imagination, nor will a plea be put in by a single inhabitant of heaven, to exempt from the destruction of the last fire, the

sublimest specimens of human skill. Myriads of volumes have been already lost and forgotten; myriads more are on their way to oblivion; myriads will still appear, but only to vanish: and of all the accumulations that shall have been made by the time of the millennium, through the longest and the purest age of reason, not one shall be saved from the general conflagration, as worthy to be borne to the heavenly world. "Knowledge shall vanish away."

But not only shall the knowledge contained in the scientific, and literary, and imaginative productions of men vanish, together with the volumes by which it was circulated, but all theological works, our creeds, catechisms, articles of faith, bodies of divinity, and works of Biblical criticism, our valued, and justly valued, commentaries, sermons, and treatises, all shall vanish. The imperfect knowledge we gain from these sources is not that which will attend us to the skies, and be sufficient for us when we have arrived at the region of cloudless splendour, the element of wisdom, the native land and dwelling-place of truth.

The introduction of this idea by the apostle gave occasion for one of the most striking digressions from his tract of thought which he ever made. His argument only required him to state that love is better than the gift of knowledge, because the latter shall cease; but he proceeds to show why it shall cease, and ascribes its discontinuance to its imperfection: he then takes an opportunity to draw one of the most sublime contrasts to be found in the Word of God, between our knowledge in the present world, and our more perfect comprehension of truth in the world that is to come.

And why shall knowledge vanish away? Because

"we know in part, and we prophesy in part." A part only of truth is made known, and therefore a part only is received by us. This may imply that there are many things we do not know at all. Who can doubt this? Upon the supposition that we were perfectly acquainted with all that is proper to be known, all that could be acquired by the aid of reason and the discoveries of revelation, still we should hear a voice saying to us, "Lo, these are a part of his ways, but the thunder of his power who can understand?" There are, doubtless, truths of vast importance and deep interest, which have never yet approached, and in the present world never will approach, the horizon of the human understanding. There are paths in the region of truth, which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and which are hid from the view of all living.

When on his death-bed, the great Newton was congratulated upon the discoveries he had made, he replied, with the modesty usually attendant on vast attainments, "I have been only walking as a boy on the shores of truth, and have, perhaps, picked up a pebble or two of greater value than others; but the vast ocean itself lies all before me. My profoundest disquisitions on the laws of nature may very possibly appear to the Almighty as the merest trifles of a puerile imagination." This is strictly correct in reference to the material universe, to which the remark was intended to apply. The ocean of natural truth, with its depths, its islands, and the continents and kingdoms to which it leads, is all before us. We have only looked upon its surface and some of the objects passing over it; we have only seen a few landmarks, on one part of one of its shores; but its infinitude of space, and the in-

numerable objects which that space contains, are yet to be explored. And with respect to the spiritual world, although we possess in the volume of inspiration a revelation of the most sublime, important, and interesting objects of knowledge; yet, probably, there are truths of which, after all that divines and philosophers have written, we can form no more conception, than we can of the objects of a sixth sense, or than a blind man can of colours. "We know only in part."

It is implied also, that what we do know, we know but imperfectly. In some cases, our knowledge is uncertainty, and amounts only to opinion; faith is weak and mixed with many doubts. We cannot exultingly exclaim, "I know;" we can scarcely say, "I believe." The object sometimes presents itself to our mind, like the sun seen dimly through a mist, now appearing, and then lost again, in the density of the fog: now a truth comes upon us, in a thin and shadowy form; we think we see it, but it is again obscured. We only see glimmerings. We perceive appearances only, and those dark outlines, not perfect pictures.

And where no doubts undermine the certainty of our knowledge, what narrow limits bound its extent! We walk as through a valley shut in on each side by lofty mountains, whose tops are lost amidst clouds, whose shadows add to the obscurity of our situation, and whose mighty masses stand between us and the country which lies beyond them. How imperfect and limited is our knowledge of the great God, of the spirituality of his nature, of his necessary self-existence from eternity, of his triune essence! How feeble are our conceptions of the complex person of Christ, the God-man Mediator; of the scheme of providence, embracing the history

of our world, and of all other worlds; and of the connection between providence and redemption! How have divines and philosophers been perplexed on the subject of the entrance of moral evil; on the reconcileableness of divine prescience with the freedom of the human will; of moral inability with human accountability! How much obscurity hangs, in our view, over many of the operations of nature! how soon do we arrive at ultimate laws, which for aught we can tell, may be only effects of causes that are hidden from our observation! In what ignorance with respect to many of the most common occurrences around us do we live! Who has perfect ideas of the essences of things, separate and apart from their qualities; of matter, for instance, or spirit? Who can perfectly conceive how the idea of motion results from that of body, or how the idea of sensation results from that of spirit? On what theme shall we meditate, and not be mortified to find how little progress we can make before we are arrested by insurmountable difficulties? On what eminence can we take our stand, and to what part of the horizon direct our eye, where we shall not see clouds and shadows resting like a veil upon the prospect? How truly it is said, "We know but in part!" Angels must wonder at the limitation of our ideas; and disembodied spirits must be astonished at the mighty bound they make, by that one step which conducts them across the threshold of eternity.

The apostle illustrates the present imperfection of our knowledge, compared with its future advancement, by two similitudes. The first is, the difference between the ideas of a child and those of a man. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child,

I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The meaning of Paul in this verse is, that our knowledge in the heavenly state will be as different from, and as superior to, any thing we gain on earth, as the ideas of an adult in the maturity of his intellectual powers, are to those which he entertained when he was a child. Our knowledge at present is that of children; we are not only in the minority, but in the infancy, of our minds. Our notions are the opinions of children; our discourses are the lispings of children; our controversies the reasonings of children. The prodigious works in literature, natural and mental science, of those lights of the world, Bacon, Milton, Boyle, Locke, Newton; and in theology, of those great divines, Owen, Howe, Charnock, Baxter, Bates, Butler, Hooker; all these are but productions of children, written for the instruction of others less taught than themselves. Yea, the apostle includes himself and his writings in the description. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. When I was a child, I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." He alludes to his own childish conceits and simplicity which had given way to the matured knowledge of his riper years; and, by implication, declares his expectation that the knowledge which he should gain in the celestial state would be as much above his present views, as they were beyond those which he entertained when he was a child. Yes: that greatest of mere men, that illustrious individual who had been in the third heaven, who had explored, as we imagine, some of the secrets of the unseen world, who had fathomed so much of the depth, and measured so much of the height, of truth; even he tells us that he was

but in his minority. What an idea does it gives us of the infinitude of knowledge yet to be obtained, when we are informed that the Bible itself, even the New Testament, that book of books, the work of which it is said, that it had God for its author, truth without any mixture of error for its contents, and salvation for its end, is but a book for children, a work for saints in their infancy, a mere elementary treatise on the subject of eternal truth, written by the finger of God, for his family, during their education and novitiate on earth.

The second similitude by which the present imperfection of our knowledge is set forth, is that very partial acquaintance which we gain with material objects by looking at them through a glass. "Now we see through a glass darkly."

Considerable diversity of opinion prevails as to the precise object of the apostle's allusion in the expression which he here employs. It is admitted that the word in the original literally signifies a mirror, and hence most expositors consider that the comparison is to this article; and that his meaning is that our knowledge of divine truth in this world, is only of that partial kind which we gain by seeing objects reflected from a mirror. But does this accord with his design, which is to represent the obscurity of our present ideas, compared with what we shall know hereafter, when that which is perfect is come? The knowledge we gain of an object that is reflected from a highly polished surface is too accurate to furnish such a comparison. Hence some are of opinion, and this is the view I take, that the allusion is to those semi-transparent substances, such as horn and diaphanous stones, which were used in windows before glass was known, and through which

objects would be but very dimly seen. Nothing could better accord with the apostle's purpose than this. How dim and shadowy do those forms appear, which we discover through such a medium; we discern only the mere outline; everything is seen imperfectly, and many things connected with the object are not seen at all. "We see it through a glass darkly." The term rendered "darkly," signifies an enigma, a riddle, a form of speech in which one thing is put for another, which, though in some respects like it, is but an obscure representation, and calculated to puzzle those who are required to find out the thing which is thus darkly shadowed forth.

Here it is proper to inquire why divine truth is at present involved in so much comparative darkness.

It accords with a life of faith. We are to walk by faith, which is not only opposed to the testimony of sense, but is distinguished also from the clearness and certainty of perfect knowledge.

It comports also with the purpose of divine revelation. There is no doubt but that some of the clouds which envelope the subjects of revealed truth, could have been dissipated, and many things put in a clearer light. A studied caution, a designed reserve, is maintained in some parts of the Bible, for as it is given to be a test of moral disposition, the evidence should be sufficient to demand belief, without being enough to compel it. The Bible affords us light enough to assist us in discharging the duties of this world, and to guide us to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life; but it concedes nothing to curiosity, nothing to merely speculative inquiry. It stands like a way-mark on the high road to eternity, and is intended simply to

announce what truth is, and the way to its dwelling-place, but not to make known to the traveller all the details of the city to which he is journeying.

And in another view this obscurity is absolutely necessary. If the disclosure were more obscure, it would be beyond our apprehension; we could know nothing: and in that case religion could have no existence, or exist only as the blind offspring of ignorance. If it were more cloudy and shadowy, it would have no power to arrest attention, or interest the heart; it might indeed point to a brighter state, where it would throw off the dense covering in which it had enwrapt itself on earth; but too little of the beauty of truth would be seen, to captivate our affections, and to allure us to follow her to that world where she displays her unveiled glories: but as revelation is now given to us, while enough of her beauty is seen to inspire us with a pure affection, enough is concealed to make us long to see her face to face. And were all the knowledge that it is possible for us to receive, actually communicated to us, who amidst such acquisitions could attend to the low pursuits of ordinary affairs? The immediate effect of such a disclosure would be to produce, so far as real Christians are concerned, a total stagnation of the affairs of this life. All the studies and pursuits, the arts and the labours, which now employ the activity of man, which support order or promote happiness, would lie neglected and abandoned. It is necessary that something of the magnitude of truth should be concealed, something of its effulgence softened, something of its beauty veiled, or the holy mind of the Christian, absorbed in such a vision, would find all that now is important in life utterly insignificant; and all that is

now attractive, tasteless and insipid. Disturbed in his lofty meditations, and interrupted in his ecstasies, by the din of business, and the intrusion of low, grovelling cares; and judging that scenes of secular activity unfitted him for communion with his heavenly visitant, he would retire from the social haunts of men, to converse with truth in the solitude of the hermitage, or the silence of the desert. So necessary is it to hang a veil on the too dazzling brightness of divine subjects.

This partial obscurity is also necessary, on account of the feebleness and limited extent of our faculties. Our minds could no more bear to look upon the unmitigated glory of divine truth, than the eye of an infant could sustain the unsoftened effulgence of the mid-day sun. Our faculties cannot grasp in its full extent one single subject out of all the mighty theory. Some vague idea may be formed of the almost illimitable range of this plan, when we recollect that its development is to employ our understanding in the highest state of intellectual perfection, and to employ it, not for a measured term, but through the countless ages of an endless existence. The study, discovery, and enjoyment of truth, will form part of the chief felicities of the heavenly state; but what must that knowledge be, which is to afford something new and interesting through eternity? How can it be obtained by man in the infancy of his existence upon earth? There are subjects yet to be known, which would have no less surpassed the understanding of Newton, than his profound discoveries in science do the mind of a child.

No wonder, then, that we walk at present amidst shades and glimmerings. But how humbling is this view of the subject to the pride of intellect! "There

is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The thinking mind is the glory of our nature; it is the candle of the Lord shining "in the earthly house of our tabernacle," and giving light to all the faculties of our soul, to guide their operation, and to direct them in their appropriate business. To what an immeasurable elevation does it raise man above the brute creation! What wonders it has achieved, what stupendous monuments of wisdom and power it has raised! Who can mention the names of the giants of the world of mind, and especially who can survey the productions of their genius, without having high notions of the capacities of the human understanding? But what are all the works of the greatest theologians, or the profoundest philosophers, when compared with the knowledge of another world, but as the ideas of one "who thought as a child and spake as a child?" Should the greatest of men be proud of their modicum of knowledge, vain of their childish notions, puffed up with their poor scantling of information? Were the meanest and least of all the spirits of just men made perfect to come down and catechise a synod of the greatest divines on earth, how soon would he nonplus and confound them amidst their most sagacious discoveries and most celebrated works. What infantine conceptions, what puerile conceits, would their most finished productions appear to him! So little reason has man for the pride of understanding, so much cause to clothe himself with the garment of humility.

CHAPTER XVI.

HEAVEN A STATE OF PERFECT KNOWLEDGE.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know but in part; but then shall I know, even as I am known."

All these expressions refer to the celestial world, and unite to teach us that heaven is a state of perfect knowledge. Here we know only part of truth; then we shall know the whole of it: here we know nothing but in a partial manner; there we shall know every thing completely: here we see truth only as we perceive the dark shadow of a man through a dense medium; there we shall behold it as clearly as we do the same man when we see him face to face: there we shall know truth even as we are known by superior beings; that is, with as much certainty, though not to the same extent.

This last expression has been sometimes explained, as conveying the intimation that we shall recognise each other in the celestial state. "We shall know others, even as we are known to them." Many reasons concur to produce the expectation of this mutual recognition. It is almost impossible to suppose that we shall maintain our identity, not only of person but of character, and also the remembrance of our earthly existence and

history, without believing the interesting truth, that we shall again be known to each other in the heavenly world. This is one of the sentiments which the sacred writers rather take for granted, than stop to prove. But certainly this is not the meaning of the passage now under consideration. The apostle here speaks of our knowledge of things, not of persons.

The felicity of the celestial state will, doubtless, include every thing that can yield delight to a corporeal, social, intellectual, and moral creature. It is eternal life, everlasting existence, attended by every thing that can render existence a blessing. It is life in the fullest sense of the term, life in the highest degree of perfection. The glorified body will probably retain the organs of sound and sight, the purest of the senses, which will become the inlet of the most pleasurable sensations; while it will be for ever free from the cravings of appetite, the languors of sickness, the distress of pain, the weariness of labour. The social impulse will be gratified by the sublime converse of the "innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." The moral feelings will delight in the holiness of every inhabitant of heaven; while the intellect will be irradiated by the light of eternal truth. The heart will thus repose in the enjoyment of the chief good, and the mind in the contemplation of the first truth, beyond which nothing remains to be enjoyed, nothing to be known.

But I am now considering heaven under the representation of a state of knowledge, and as an intellectual condition. In this light the Scriptures frequently speak of the glory to be revealed. They call it an inheritance

"in light;" they describe it as a world where there is no night. There "we shall see him as he is," "behold his glory," "see him face to face:" expressions which relate more to the eyes of the mind than those of the body. Perhaps we do not sufficiently contemplate heaven in this view of it. The greater part of mankind are taken up with mere sensations, and are but little acquainted with the exquisite enjoyment connected with the perception of evidence and the apprehension of truth. The rapturous exclamation, "I have found it!" is rarely uttered by the multitude over any thing but the acquisition of wealth or the gratification of appetite. But those who have been engaged in any measure in intellectual pursuits, will be able to appreciate the pleasures of knowledge. Evidence is to the mind like light to the eye, and the perception of truth as water to the thirsty. Even the comparatively barren sciences of number and figure, which exclude the operation of the fancy, and present nothing to exercise the passions or gratify the imagination, the truths of which derive all their interest from the evidence by which they are supported, or the manner in which they are applied to other purposes, even these are a source of high enjoyment to the human mind, which is ever seeking to arrive at certainty, and can find no repose without it. What overpowering delight has been experienced by some men, when, after a long process of reasoning, or a fatiguing course of experiments, they have at length arrived at the demonstration of some fact or truth. If, then, in the present world, where the subjects of our research are often so insignificant, where our knowledge is obtained with such labour, is limited

by so much ignorance, and blended with so much error; if amidst such circumstances the pleasure of knowledge be so great, what will it be in the heavenly state!

Let us consider what will be the objects of our knowledge.

If I may be allowed the expression, we shall know all things that are knowable, so far as an acquaintance with them will contribute to our felicity. We shall know everything that is essential to the right performance of our duty, or to the most perfect gratification of our intellect; all that lies within our proper sphere or compass as creatures.

We shall perfectly comprehend all the laws which govern the material world. The discovery of these is now considered to be among the most dignified and gratifying employments of the human understanding. It was his discoveries in natural philosophy which gave to our great Newton his celebrity. What a high station in the records of fame is assigned to Linnæus, La Place, Davy, and Watt, and to others who have explored the secrets and explained the laws of nature! They are ranked amongst the illustrious members and most valuable benefactors of their species. They are looked up to with a kind of semi-idolatry, and their praises are continually chaunted for their vast achievements, not only in adding to the stock of knowledge, but in accumulating fresh honours upon human nature. What sublime and astonishing facts are included in the sciences of astronomy, optics, chemistry! How much of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Divine Architect is displayed in the works of creation, yet is now hidden from a great portion of the redeemed, who by the dis-

advantages of their education are shut out from the sources of knowledge. But they will be admitted to them in heaven. Creation will not be destroyed at the judgment day, but only purified. The vast and splendid machine will not then be thrown aside, broken up, and consigned to oblivion. Nothing which the hand of the Creator has framed shall be forgotten. The brilliant scenes which are now passing before our eyes, but on which many even of regenerated minds look without understanding them, are not a mere pageant. Beautiful was the remark of the eminently pious Bishop Hall, who, on being told in his old age that his views of astronomy were not correct, replied, "Well! it may be so: but I am going to heaven, and as I shall take the stars in my way, I must leave the subject till then, when every mistake will be rectified." The Christian will lose all those disadvantages of his earthly condition which arose from his being born either in an age when knowledge was in its infancy, or amidst those privations of poverty which denied him access to the sources of information. In the hour of death, the pious but illiterate tenant of the cottage, on whose mind the orb of science never rose, though the Sun of Righteousness poured upon it the light of a spiritual illumination, shall ascend above the disadvantages of education, and make a glorious transition from the shades of ignorance, in which he dwelt upon earth, into the cloudless transparency of the firmament on high. His natural faculties, compressed and enfeebled now by the circumstances of his birth, shall then expand to a comprehension, and attain to a vigour, probably not surpassed by the loftiest of the human race; and he, too, shall know in heaven,

the works of the God of nature, as he knew below, and shall still better know above, the works of the God of grace.

Providence will form another mighty range of inquiry, and another source of delightful knowledge in heaven. By providence, I mean God's moral government of the universe, the course of the divine administration towards rational and moral creatures: that mighty scheme, which commenced its application before time was born, or the foundations of the earth were laid; which embraces the annals of other worlds besides ours; which includes the history of angels, men, and devils. Providence comprises in one harmonious scheme the whole range of events from the formation of the first creature, to the last moment of time, with all the tendencies, reasons, connexions, and results of things; the separate existence of each individual, and the progress and reciprocal influence of the species. Providence is now full of mysteries. We are puzzled at almost every step. Innumerable are the events over which, after having in vain endeavoured to sound their depth with the line of our reason, we must exclaim, "O the depth!" But we shall know all: why sin was permitted, and how it entered, with all the train of now incomprehensible results which followed its introduction into the universe. It will then be made apparent to us, why so long a period elapsed between the first promise of a Saviour, and his incarnation sufferings and death: why, for so many ages, the world was left in ignorance sin and misery: why such errors were permitted to enter the church, and so soon and so extensively to corrupt the simplicity and deform the beauty of the Christian profession: why the Man of Sin was suffered to establish

his seat in the temple of Christ; to exalt himself above all that is called God; to utter his blasphemy; to shed the blood of the saints; and so long to spread the clouds of superstition, and the shades of death, over Christendom: why the imposture of Mecca was allowed to arise, and for so many ages to render a large portion of the earth inaccessible to the rays of the Sun of Righteousness: why idolatry, with all its sanguinary deities, and all its bloody and obscene rites, was left so long to insult the heavens, to pollute the earth, and to curse mankind. What deep, unfathomable mysteries are these! How confounding to our reason, and how utterly beyond our research! What astonishment and delight, what inconceivable emotions, will be produced by the gradual unfolding of the mighty scheme to us, by our progressive discoveries of the connexions and issues of things, and the wondrous display of divine glory which we shall perceive. How we shall be enraptured to find that those events which now so confound us, were dark only by excess of wisdom, and that those facts which so often distressed us upon earth, were but the more sombre shades of the perfect picture! What manifestations of Deity will then be made, when God shall admit us to his cabinet, and lay open to us the arcana of his government!

And, doubtless, we shall not only see the harmony and wisdom of Providence in its general aspect and its more comprehensive combinations and arrangements, but in its particular bearing on our own private and personal history. The most important and interesting chapter in the volume of universal history is, to us, that which contains the record of our life. What clouds and shadows still rest, and in the present state ever

must rest, upon our obscure and humble annals! How often is Jehovah, in his dealings with us, a God that hideth himself! How often does he wrap himself in clouds, and pursue his path upon the waters, where we can neither see his goings nor trace his footsteps! How many of his dispensations are inexplicable, and how many of his judgments are unfathomable by the short line of our reason! But whatever we know not now, we shall know hereafter: the crooked will be made straight, the clouds of darkness will be scattered, and all his conduct towards us placed in the broad day-light of eternity. We shall see the connexion which our individual history has with the general scheme of providence; and perceive how, notwithstanding our insignificance, we are no less necessary to the perfection of the whole plan than the great ones of the earth. We shall see how all the varying, and numerous, and seemingly opposite events of our history, were combined into one gracious purpose of mercy, which was most perfectly wise in all its combinations; now we believe that "all things work together for good," then we shall see how this end was accomplished by events, which at the time put us to so much grief, and involved us in so much surprise. Delightful, most delightful, will it be to retrace our winding and often gloomy course, and discern at each change and turning, the reason of every occurrence and the wisdom of God; delightful will it be to discern the influence which all our temporal circumstances, all our disappointments, losses, and perplexities, had upon our permanent and celestial happiness. How much of divine wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness, will our short and simple history present; and what rapturous fervour will

the discovery give to the song of praise which we shall utter before the throne of God and the Lamb!

Revelation, as containing the scheme of human redemption by Jesus Christ, will be another object of our study and source of knowledge. The Bible is given to make God known; and one page, yea, one verse, of the Bible, makes known more of God than all the volume of nature. But, after all, how little do we know of God, of his essence, of his triune existence, of his natural perfections, of his moral attributes! What an unfathomable mystery is Deity! In what a pavilion of darkness does Jehovah dwell! Who by searching can find out God? In heaven we shall know him, for we shall see him face to face: we shall behold his glory, and see him as he is. We shall have as perfect an acquaintance with the Divine character, as a finite mind can attain to; and in this one object, shall find employment and bliss throughout eternity. We shall never exhaust this theme. Eternity is necessary to study that which is infinite. We shall there comprehend, so far as a finite mind can, the complex person of Jesus Christ. We cannot now understand this; "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh;" but what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Then will the cross be seen as the central point of the divine administration, bright with ten thousand glories, and sending out its beams to the extremity of the moral system. The ruin of mankind by their federal connexion with Adam; the election of the Jews, and the long abandonment of the Gentiles; the slow advance of Christianity to its millennial reign and triumph; the bearing of redemption upon other orders of beings besides man; the difficulties which hang like impenetrable clouds

upon the doctrines of personal election, regeneration, perseverance, the freedom of the will viewed in connexion with divine prescience and predestination; all, all, will be laid open to the view of glorified saints in heaven. Every thing in the Scripture which is now dark, will be made light. Every seeming contradiction will be reconciled, and the faith and patience of the saints will be rewarded, for having received the truth on the credit of Him who spoke it, without demanding to see before they believed. Such will be the sources of knowledge in heaven. O the bliss of eternally drinking in knowledge from such fountains!

I will now consider the advantages which the heavenly state will possess for the acquisition of knowledge.

The soul will there be perfect in holiness, and thus the understanding will be delivered from the disturbing and bewildering influence of sin. In our present state of imperfection, the depravity of our nature contracts and misdirects our judgment: the corruptions of the heart send up a mist which veils the lustre of truth, and conceals its extent and glory from the mind. The judgment cannot now see spiritual objects in all their range, and order, and beauty, because of sin. But in heaven this contracting and darkening influence will cease for ever. No evil bias, no sinful prejudice, will ever warp the judgment: no disease of the soul will dim its eye, or enfeeble its power. With eagle pinion it will soar to the fountain of radiance, and with eagle vision bear the full blaze of its glory. The natural faculties of the mind will then attain to their full maturity of strength. The mind is here in its infancy, there it will attain its full age. Even the intellects of the greatest geniuses, while on earth, are but human minds in

childhood, as I have already stated, and their most prodigious efforts are but as infantine exercises. Here they only tried their powers: but in heaven their minds will put forth, to their full extent, all the wondrous faculties which are now shut up and compressed in our common nature, for want of room and opportunity to expand. In heaven, we shall not be diverted and called off from the pursuit of truth by the inferior interests of the body: the soul will not be prevented from making excursions into the regions of light, by the cares wants and anxieties which abound in this state of being, but will be left at leisure to pursue her sublime researches. She will have nothing to hinder the acquirement and enjoyment of knowledge. To crown all, heaven is an eternal state, and everlasting ages will be afforded through which the glorified mind will carry on its pursuits. Were the term of human life again protracted to the antediluvian age, what vast attainments would be made by us all in the discovery of truth! What, then, must it be to have eternity through which to grow in knowledge?

I may notice the characteristics of our knowledge. It will be perfect; by which you are not to understand that it will be as complete as the nature of things admits of, for we should then possess a comprehension equal to that of God. We cannot perfectly know every thing as it may be known: our ideas of many things must be limited, especially those which relate to the divine nature. By perfection, I mean freedom from error: our knowledge will be free from all admixture of doubt, suspense, and fallacy; our attainments will be bounded only by our capacity; there will, perhaps, be a gradation of mind in heaven, no less obviously marked than that which exists on earth: but all capacities will be filled.

Our knowledge will doubtless be progressive. Increase of ideas is, perhaps, in the case of a creature essential to felicity. We now find more pleasure in receiving a new and important truth, than we experience in all we before possessed. A state in which there remains nothing more to be known, does not convey an idea of happiness so vividly as that where the delight of discovering something new is ever added to the joy of contemplating so much that is old. What a view of heaven! An eternal advance in the most important knowledge; an everlasting accumulation of ideas; an interminable progression in truth. "In the march of the mind through intellectual and moral perfection, there is no period set: this perfection of the just is for ever carrying on, is carrying on, but shall never come to a close. God shall behold his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes, and for ever drawing near to himself, yet still infinitely distant from him the fountain of all goodness. There is not in religion a more joyful and triumphant consideration than this perpetual progress which the soul makes in the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at its ultimate period. Here truth has the advantage of fable. No fiction, however bold, presents to us a conception so elevating and astonishing as this interminable line of heavenly excellence. To look upon the glorified spirit as going on from strength to strength, adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; perpetually assimilating more and more to the infinite goodness; itself continually adorning the heavens with new beauty, and ever brightening in the splendour of moral glory, through the ages of eternity, has something in it so transcendent, as to satisfy the most unbounded ambition of an immortal

spirit. Christian! does not thy heart glow at the thought that there is a time marked out in the annals of heaven when thou shalt be what the angels now are; when thou shalt shine with that glory in which principalities now appear; and when, in full communion with the Most High, thou shalt 'see him as he is?'"

How our knowledge in heaven will be acquired, whether by testimony, by immediate revelation, or by any method of mental application, it would be idle to speculate. We know that whatever mode is determined upon by God, will promote and not interrupt our felicity; we shall have nothing of the weariness of study, nothing of the anxiety of doubt, nothing of the torture of suspense. Ideas will flow into the soul with the same ease and pleasure on our part, as rays of light come to the bodily eye.

Whatever knowledge we gain in heaven will be transforming: it will not be mere opinion or uninfluential speculation. All our ideas will be as fuel to feed the flame of love, which will then burn upon the altar of the soul; all will be quickening, penetrating, influential. Our opinions will be principles of action. Every thing will lead us to see more of God, to love him with a more intense glow of holy affection, and to be more conformed to him. The light of truth will ever be associated with the warmth of love. "We shall be like God for we shall see him as he is."

It is difficult to find in the volume of revelation a stronger internal evidence of its divine original, than the view it gives of the celestial state, combining, as it does, the perfection of knowledge and of purity. Every other representation which has been given us of heaven, bears the mark of an earthly source, the proof of being

a human device. As man, when he had abandoned the one living and true God, in seeking for a Deity, found a prototype in his own passions; so, in forming a heaven, he collected all his materials from the objects of his own fleshly delights. The Elysium of the Greeks and the Romans; the Vahalla of the Scandinavians; the Paradise of the Mahometans; the fantastic abodes of departed souls in which the Hindoos believe; are all adapted to their depraved appetites, and were suggested by their corrupt imaginations. Man, left to himself, never looked for happiness to constitute his Paradise, beyond the pleasures of a seraglio, of a field of glory, or of a hall resounding with the shout of victory, he never imagined any thing beyond the gratification of his evil passions or his senses. A heaven made up of perfect knowledge and of perfect love, is a vision entirely and exclusively divine, and never beamed upon the human understanding, till reflected upon it from the Word of God. How worthy of God is such a representation of celestial bliss! It is an emanation from his own nature, as thus described, "God is light: God is love." The glorious reality is evidently the provision of his own wisdom and grace; and the sublime description of it in the Scriptures is as manifestly the delineation of his own finger.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE.

Now abide these three, Faith, Hope, Charity; but the greatest of these is Charity.

Such is the triune nature of true religion, as described by an inspired penman; of that religion about which myriads of volumes have been written, and so many controversies have been agitated. How short and how simple an account; within how narrow a compass does it lie; and how easily understood, might one have expected, would have been a subject expressed in terms so familiar as these. This beautiful verse has furnished the arts with one of their most exquisite subjects: poets have sung the praises of faith, hope, and charity; the painter has exhibited the holy three in all the glowing colours of his pencil; and the sculptor has given them in almost breathing forms of marble; while the orator has employed them as the ornaments of his eloquence. But orators, poets, sculptors, and painters have strangely misunderstood them, and too often proved that they knew nothing of them but as the mere abstractions of their genius: what they presented to the eye were mere earthly forms, which bore no resemblance to these divine and spiritual graces: and multitudes who had no

taste for the virtues described by the apostle, have gazed with admiration kindling into rapture, on the productions of the artist. Religion is a thing essentially different from a regard to classic elegance; not indeed that it is opposed to it; for as it refines the heart, it may be supposed to exert a favourable influence on the understanding, and by correcting the moral taste, to give a still clearer perception of the sublime and the beautiful. It is greatly to be questioned, however, whether religion has not received more injury than benefit from the fine arts; whether men have not been made carelessly familiar with the more awful realities of truth by the exhibitions of the poet, the painter, and the engraver; and whether they have not mistaken those sensibilities which have been awakened by a contemplation of the more tender and touching scenes of revelation, as set forth upon canvass or in marble, for the emotions of true piety. Perhaps the "Paradise Lost" has done very little to produce any serious concern to avoid everlasting misery; and "The Descent from the Cross," by Rubens, or "The Transfiguration," by Raphael, as little to draw the heart to the great objects of Christianity. Innumerable representations, and many of them very splendid productions too, have been given of faith, hope, and charity: and doubtless by these means many kindly emotions have been called awhile into exercise, but after all they were nothing but a transient effect of the imagination upon the feelings. It is of vast consequence that we should recollect that no affections are entitled to the character of religion, but such as are excited by a distinct perception of revealed truth. It is not the emotion awakened by a picture presented to the eye, or by a sound

addressed to the ear, but that arising from the contemplation of a fact, or a statement laid before the mind, that constitutes piety. I now proceed to the subject of this chapter.

Faith is the belief of testimony, accompanied, if the testimony be delivered by a living individual, by a disposition to depend upon his veracity; and, if it relate to something in which we are interested, by an expectation of the fulfilment of the promise. In reference to spiritual things, it means a firm persuasion of the truth of what God has revealed in his word. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" or, as the passage is rendered by some, "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It is a belief, not only that the Bible is true, but of the truth contained in the Bible: it is not merely a perception of the evidences of Christianity, as a divine revelation, but also a perception of the truth of its doctrines. General faith means a belief of all that God has revealed in the Scriptures, whether it be invitation or promise, command or threatening, prophecy or history; and it is this that the apostle describes in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Faith in Christ, or justifying faith, relates to that part of the divine Word which testifies concerning the person and work of the Redeemer. Saving belief takes into its view every thing contained in the Word of God, but its special object is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world: just as the eye of a condemned criminal, at the place of execution, beholds the assembled multitude, the fatal tree, and the messenger whom he sees hastening with the reprieve; but it is on the last that his view is fixed

with the greatest steadiness and delight. Faith in Christ, then, is a full persuasion of the truth of the glorious gospel concerning Him, accompanied by a full confidence in his veracity, and an expectation of the fulfilment of his word. It is not a mere notion, a purely intellectual act; but certainly implies an exercise of the will. It is the belief of something spoken by a living person, and necessarily involves a confidence in his veracity: it is something interesting to us, and must awaken expectation. Hence it is represented by the apostle as synonymous with the act of committing the soul into the hands of Christ. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." If it were a purely intellectual act, how could it be the subject of command or the matter of duty? For can that which is exclusively mental, contain either moral good or evil? If faith be purely intellectual, must not unbelief, its opposite, be the same? But it is said that as the disposition influences the judgment, and leads to either faith or unbelief, according to the state of the heart, the moral excellence of one, and the turpitude of the other, arises from its cause. But is not the Scripture most explicit in its condemnation of unbelief as evil in itself; and in its commendation of faith, as morally excellent? The question is not what is the meaning of the term faith, as employed by metaphysicians, but as employed by the apostles: and this meaning can be gathered only from their writings, in which many terms are employed with a signification somewhat different to that in which they are employed in ordinary discourse. Justification, for instance, in reference to ordinary affairs, means the act of declaring an accused person to be innocent of the

charge brought against him; but as the term is used by the sacred writers, it means nothing more than treating a person acknowledged to be guilty, as righteous, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ.

Faith is not that which constitutes the ground of our acceptance with God, but which places us upon that ground; it is not our justifying righteousness, but that which unites us to Christ, and appropriates his righteousness to ourselves. It is true that a different view seems to be given by the apostle, when he says, quoting the Old Testament expression, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." It would seem from this, and so it has been contended, that his faith was accepted in lieu of his obedience, as the matter of his righteousness, and the ground of his acceptance with God. But a more correct translation of the passage will rectify this mistake, and prevent what must be considered a fundamental error on the very important doctrine of justification by faith. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him 'to,' 'in order to,' or 'towards,' his justification."*

* Great efforts have been made by the opponents of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers for their justification, and especially by Macknight, to overturn this doctrine by aid of the text we are now considering. This critic thought he had found in this passage a triumphant proof that our own faith, or act of believing, and not Christ's obedience unto death, constitutes our justifying righteousness, in lieu of our own good works. It is a little remarkable that so acute a critic should have overlooked the force of the Greek preposition here employed, as established not only by other scholars, but by himself; for in his Essay on the meaning of Greek particles, prefixed to his Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, although he gives fourteen different renderings of this preposition, the meaning of "for," or "in lieu of," has no place. We have "concerning," "in order to," "towards," but not "for," and yet he has given it this meaning in the text.

It is not then for our faith, but by it, that we are justified; faith, as an act of ours, is no more the meritorious ground of our justification than any other of our performances; for if it were, we should still be justified by works, as faith is as much a work as penitence. The apostle is sufficiently explicit on this head, where he says, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned towards justification." "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Hope is the desire and expectation of those future good things which God has promised in his word. Faith believes the promise, hope desires its fulfilment. It is essential to hope, that its object be some good thing either supposed or real; for no one can desire that which is evil, as evil: and its objects must be something future; for who expects that of which he is already in possession? Desire, without expectation, is either mere wishing or else despondency; expectation, without desire, is either indifference or dread; the union of both constitutes hope. The object of Christian hope is thus stated by the apostle: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, [in Christ,] purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Paul represents it as that which the whole rational creation has groaned after, ever since

the entrance of sin into the world. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."*

* Romans viii, 18-25. This passage has been thought to contain inexplicable difficulties, and to have been in the mind of the apostle Peter when he spoke of the things hard to be understood in the writings of Paul. Upon this text, some have raised the benevolent, but, as it strikes me, the groundless hypothesis of the resurrection of the brute creation. If we are willing to be guided by the generally acknowledged canon of interpretation, of explaining a difficult passage by the context, we shall find a light which will conduct us through the intricacies of this text, and illuminate our course as we proceed. If we examine the context we shall find, both from what precedes and what follows, that the apostle is speaking of the future happiness of the righteous. The passage is introduced thus: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;" then follows the expression, "for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;" or as it might be rendered, looketh for the revelation of the sons of God; i.e., the glory to be revealed of which he had just spoken. Next comes a parenthetical description

Christian hope is not a mere feeble and fluctuating expectation of eternal happiness, in its nature partaking more of uncertainty than of confidence; for it is by a beautiful figure of speech called a sure and steadfast anchor: and in other places, without a figure, it is called a lively hope, a good hope, and a confident one; and we are also admonished to go on to the full assurance of hope: expressions, especially the last, which amount to the highest degree of confident and triumphant ex-

of the present earthly and temporal condition of the moral creation, and how it was brought into this condition; "For the creature was made subject to vanity;" i.e., to the misery of this present world, terminating in death; "not willingly," not on account of their own personal transgression, "but by him who hath subjected the same;" i.e. Adam, their natural root and federal head. The expressions, "in hope," should be taken from the end of the twentieth verse, and placed at the commencement of the twenty-first; the conjunction should be translated "that," instead of "because;" and the twenty-first verse connected with the nineteenth, allowing for the intervening parenthesis, would thus read: "The earnest expectation of the creature looketh for the revelation of the sons of God; in hope that the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption;" i.e., death: to which the apostle afterwards opposes "the redemption of the body," or the resurrection into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "For we know that the whole creation" or every rational creature, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they;" i.e., the whole heathen world; "but ourselves," the believers in the Gospel of Christ, "who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body," the resurrection, and consequent full revelation of our dignity and immortal glory as the sons of God.

Such is the meaning of this passage, in which the apostle, to give importance to the subject of future glory, represents it as the object of longing desire to the whole rational creation, the various tribes of which are exhibited as lifting up their heads from beneath the bondage of misery and death, and directing an exploring eye and eager hope towards immortality, as that alone which could relieve their

pectation. Many Christians seem to err on this subject, by supposing that the grace of which we are now speaking, means nothing more than a state of mind partaking of so much doubt as leaves them very little above the level of absolute despondency. Hope must ever be in proportion to our faith; if the latter be weak, the former will inevitably be so too.

It will be perceived, that although these three graces are in some respects very different, yet there are others

sorrows and satisfy their desires. They knew not with certainty that there was such a state; their notions were obscure and fluctuating; it was rather a wish than a belief: but it was that which they may be truly said to have groaned after, as what could alone compensate for the sorrows and the brevity of human life. It is no objection to this view of the passage, to say that the heathen could be scarcely said, in their state of ignorance, to hope to be delivered "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God;" for things are frequently set forth by the sacred writers, not as they are actually contemplated by the persons in connexion with whom they are introduced, but as they are in themselves. Thus, Christ is called the "desire of all nations;" not that all nations really desired him, but they desired happiness, which his advent alone could introduce. So, in this case, every creature longs for that immortality, or future state of happiness, which is in itself, though not contemplated as such by them, the glorious revelation of the sons of God. This most striking and beautiful passage has no reference to the brute creation, as groaning under the effects of man's sin, and their delivery from it by their own resurrection; no reference to any physical change to be produced during the millennium in the material world, by a bold figure represented as now burdened and pained by human guilt. For what has this to do with the context, or with the design of the apostle, which is to comfort believers under the sufferings of the mortal state? It relates to that glory, honour, and eternal life, which God has promised to them that love him: in reference to which he so sublimely affirms, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The view here given is that which is taken by Hammond and Macknight.

in which they have points of strong resemblance. Faith has something of the expectation of hope, and hope something of the desire of love. Hope touches faith at the point of expectation: love touches hope at the point of desire: and thus, like the colours of the rainbow, they maintain their distinction, while, at the same time, they soften down into each other by almost insensible degrees.

But how are we to understand the apostle, when he says, "there remain these three?" He here alludes to the miraculous operations of the primitive church, and contrasts with their transient existence the permanent continuance of these cardinal virtues in the Christian church. Miracles were introduced to establish the credibility of the gospel testimony, and having delivered their evidence, retired for ever; but faith, and hope, and love, are to remain as the very essentials of true religion. Particular forms of church government are only the attire which piety wears, or the habitation in which it dwells: but these graces are the body, soul, and spirit of vital religion. When these are no longer to be found upon earth, godliness may be said to have retired and gone.

But are these the only Christian virtues which have outlived the age of miracles, and which are destined still to live and flourish on the earth? Certainly not. Penitence, temperance; yea, whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report; are as permanent and as strong in their obligations, as faith, and hope, and love: but these three either represent, or imply, or excel all others.

They are the main trunk, from which all others issue as the branches, and by which they are supported.

"Now abideth faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity!" Love among the Christian virtues is, as poets have described Gabriel among archangels, the noblest and highest of all the seraph train. But we are not to suppose that it was the apostle's intention to depreciate the value and importance of the other two. What can be more important and necessary than the faith by which we are united to Christ, and justified in the sight of God; by which we purify our hearts, and overcome the world? Turn to the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the sacred writer seems to conduct you into the temple of Christianity; and after exhibiting the names, and the statues, and the recorded deeds of the heroes of the church, and displaying before you the spoils they have won in the battles of the Lord, says to you, "Behold the triumphs of faith!" Faith is the means of love: hence said the apostle, "Faith, which worketh by love." Nor could it be his intention to depreciate hope, which is called "the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil;" of which it is said, "We are saved by hope;" and every man that hath this hope, "purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Much less are we warranted, from this expression, to select love as the exclusive object of our pursuit, and to cultivate it to the neglect of the other two. Separate from them, it can have no existence. Any attempt to build it up without them, is like the effort to raise a superstructure without a foundation. "Add to your faith, brotherly kindness and charity," says the apostle.

It is only as we believe the testimony of God's love to us, which is contained in the gospel, that we can possess Christian charity to our fellow men. What the apostle means is, that there are some views of love, in which it must be allowed to possess a higher degree of moral excellence than either faith or hope.

1. It is the end which faith and hope are the means of producing. Love is what might be called an ultimate virtue; but faith and hope subordinate ones. Justification itself is but part of the divine means for bringing the soul of man into a state of moral perfection. The ultimate end to be obtained by redemption is the restoration of the image of God to the human spirit; and pardon is the introductory and subsidiary means. Hence faith, by which we are justified, is an exercise of mind, which produces, and is intended to produce in us a conformity to the divine character. It is not a grace which terminates in itself, without being calculated or designed to originate and support anything else, which is the case with love. Sanctity is the end of truth: so our Lord teaches us, "Sanctify them by thy truth." The truth is received into the mind by faith that it may impart sanctity, which includes love. Similar remarks will apply to hope, of which it is said, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself." Christian charity, then, attains this eminence by being the ultimate virtue to which the other two refer. It is that moral condition of the soul which it is the aim and purpose of all things to produce.

2. Love is a social grace, while faith and hope are exercised in reference to ourselves. We believe and hope with an immediate regard to our own happiness; but in the exercise of love, we regard the happiness

of others. Christian charity is a constant efflux of benevolent feeling, from the pure fountain of a heart devoted to the well-being of our species; faith and hope are the channels by which we receive the streams of peace and joy, from the fulness of God. By the latter, we are recipients of happiness; by the former, we are its distributors: by believing, we rejoice; by loving, we awaken the joys of others: by one, we become the heirs of salvation, who are ministered to by angels; by the other, we become ministering angels in our turn. What a philanthropist must that man be who cultivates, and carries even to tolerable perfection, the disposition described in this chapter, and who displays all its properties in his intercourse with society: how must such an individual bless all with whom he has to do: as he pursues his holy career, sorrow is alleviated, care is mitigated, want supplied, wickedness reformed, by his efforts; the groans of creation are hushed, and the tears of humanity wiped away, by his divine charity: and he becomes, in his measure, like that heavenly visitant to our world, of whom it is said, "He went about doing good."

"Survey, with admiration and delight, the mighty operations and the splendid achievements of this powerful and benevolent principle, as they are to be seen within, and only within, the hallowed pale of Christianity. What are all the numerous and diversified institutions in our own land, where houseless poverty has found a home; craving hunger, a supply; forsaken infancy, a protector; helpless age, a refuge; ignorance, an instructor; penitence, a comforter; virtue, a defence; but the triumphs and glories of love? What are all those sublime combinations of human energies, property,

and influence, which have been formed for the illumination, reformation, and salvation of the human race? What are Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, Anti-Slavery Societies, Peace Societies, but the mighty monuments of that love, "which seeketh not her own, and is kind?" What are the tears of commiseration, which flow for human sorrows, but the drops that fall from the eye of love? What the joy that is excited by the sight of happiness, but the smiles of love? What was it that made the great apostle of the Gentiles willing not only to bear any accumulation of suffering, indignity, and reproach, but to pour out his blood as a libation for others, and even to be accursed from Christ, and from mankind in general, for his kinsmen? Love. What is it that renders the modern missionary willing to go into perpetual exile from the land of his fathers and of his birth, to spend the future years of his life, and find at last a grave, amidst the sands of Africa, or the snows of Greenland; willing to exchange the society of Europeans for that of savages, whose minds are brutishly ignorant, and whose manners are disgustingly offensive: willing to quit the land of Sabbaths, Bibles, and churches, for regions over which the demon of superstition has extended his horrid sway, and beneath whose yoke nothing is to be seen but orgies in which lust and cruelty struggle for pre-eminence? Love. What was it that breathed into the heart of Howard that spirit which so filled and fired his imagination with visions of human misery, and which brought from so many dungeons the plaintive cry, "Come over and help us!" that he could no longer rest in his own house, or in his own country, but travelled, again and again, across the

breadth of Europe, in quest of wretchedness; descending into the captive's cell, that he might weigh his fetters, and measure his narrow apartment, and examine his food, to ascertain whether there was not more of misery in his hapless and forgotten lot, than justice demanded for the punishment of his crime; who inhaled the infected atmosphere of the lazaretto, to grapple with the plague, that fell destroyer of the human race, to approach which seemed to be courting death? It was love that formed the character of that illustrious man, and presented him to the notice and admiration of the civilized world. What was it that gave courage, confidence, and self-denial to that extraordinary woman, who ventured among the furies of Newgate; where, if she had not cause to fear that assassins would attempt her life, she must have calculated upon finding demons, whose malignity, excited by the purity and virtue which seemed to set in stronger light, by the power of contrast, their own vices, would vent its rage on the angel form which had disturbed them? If ever the beauty of charity was exhibited by one of our species, it was seen in Mrs Fry when she entered the cells of our metropolitan prisons, and called their vicious and loathsome inmates around her, to be instructed and reformed. And what is it that makes ten thousand holy men and women employ themselves continually in all kinds of self-denying exertions, to instruct the ignorant, to relieve the miserable, to reform the wicked? These, O heavenly charity, are thy works, the displays of thy excellences, and the proofs of thy pre-eminence!

3. It is a distinguishing excellence of love, that it is like God. We are not at all surprised that the philosopher to whom the question was proposed, "What

is God?" should have requested a day to prepare his answer; and when that was expired, should have asked a second, and a third, and should have at length, on being reproved for his delay, confessed to the monarch who proposed the query, that the more he examined the subject the more he was confounded; and the farther he penetrated into it, the deeper and deeper he seemed plunging into darkness and mystery. Revelation has come to the aid of reason, and compared with it, has thrown a blaze of radiance on the all-important subject: and yet, with its light shining around us, so little do we understand of God, that he may be said, as it respects us, to "make darkness his pavilion;" for "Who by searching can find out God, who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Of his essence we know nothing: of his eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence, next to nothing. His moral perfections are, it is true, more easily understood by us: but as these are all infinite, it is but little even of these we can understand. "He is a rock, his way is perfect, without iniquity, just and right is he." Inflexible justice, immaculate purity, inviolable truth, unimpeachable fidelity, belong to him; but if this were all the view the Scripture gave us of his attributes, if the delineation of the divine character stopped here, how much would be wanting to the sinner's comfort! Can the trembling and condemned criminal take much pleasure in contemplating the power, justice, and truth of the judge, who holds his destiny in his hand, at least till he knows that his judge has mercy also and has the power of exercising it in his case? and as little would it comfort us to know all the other attributes of Deity, if we could not exultingly exclaim, in the language of the apostle,

"God is love!" Sublime and heart-reviving declaration! Never was anything uttered more calculated to delight the soul of man. Such a view of Deity is peculiar to revelation. Idolatry, in all her strange devices, in all her image-making processes, never conceived of such a God: power, wisdom, justice, truth, have all received their appropriate symbols of divinity, and have been worshipped under material forms; but benevolence never had statue, temple, or priest. It was too pure a conception for the human heart, and too elevated an idea for human reason. "God is love!" This refers not of course to his essence, but to his character. It means that benevolence is his whole moral character: not only that his nature is one sum of infinite excellence, but that his conduct is one mighty impulse to that which is good; in other words, that the divine disposition is an infinite propensity to delight in happiness already existing, or to produce it where it does not exist. But be it recollected that the benevolence of God is the love, not merely of a philanthropist or a father, but of a governor or ruler, who, in the exercise of his good-will to any particular person, cannot sacrifice the general welfare; and whose benevolence is not only compatible with the exercise of retributive justice, but requires it.

Such is the disposition of the divine mind, to which, by Christian love, we are conformed: that benevolence of the Deity, which, in its propensity to delight in happiness and to create it, makes him infinite in patience to bear with the millions of crimes which daily insult and provoke him; infinite in mercy, to pardon the most aggravated transgressions; infinite in kindness, to provide for the wants and comforts of his creatures. The highest pre-eminence in Christian love, the richest gem

in its crown of honour, is its resemblance to God. There is nothing even remotely analogous to faith or hope in the divine nature. He that is omniscient cannot be said to believe; nor he that is infinitely blessed, and possessed of a divine fulness, be said to hope; but he can and does love. Resemblance to God is the highest glory of man. We should esteem it an honour to bear a faint impress of some of the more distinguished of the human race. It would be thought a high compliment to have it said that our genius resembled that of Milton, and our benevolence that of Howard; that our faith was like Abraham's, or our meekness akin to that of Moses: but how much greater is the distinction to bear, by love, the image of God.

4. Love is eternal in its duration: it ascends with us to the skies, to live in our hearts, as the temper of our souls, for ever and ever. It is questioned by some whether the two other graces will cease in the celestial state. It has been contended that as the glories of the divine nature are illimitable and innumerable, and the glorified mind will not attain to a perfect knowledge of these at once, but be continually receiving fresh communications on this vast theme, there must be both faith and hope in heaven; for as we successively receive these, we must believe in the assurance of those which are to come, and must perpetually look forward with expectation and desire. But does not this assume what cannot be proved, that our knowledge of God and divine things will be communicated in heaven by testimony, and not be acquired by intuition? It is not at all necessary that our growing knowledge, our eternally accumulating ideas, should be thus conveyed to us; for they may, for aught we know, be the reward of pleasant study, or

they may flow into the mind, as the ideas of sensation do into the soul, without any effort, and may also come with all the certainty of that intuition by which we perceive the truth of axioms. To say that this is belief, is to confound two things essentially distinct, knowledge and faith. So that it does not appear plain that faith, in any sense of the term, will exist in heaven. But though it could be proved that, in some modification of the term, it would be exercised in the celestial state, such a belief would differ so materially from that which we now possess, and by which we are justified and saved, that it may with propriety be said, faith will cease in heaven. All the great objects to which faith there refers are absent now: we believe in their existence, through the report made of them in the Word of God; but in heaven they will be immediately present to the senses of the glorified body, or the perceptive faculties of the spirit made perfect. Nor is it by any means certain that hope will exist in the heavenly state; for although it is difficult to conceive how there can be otherwise than a futurity, even in eternity, and how there can be a state of mind otherwise than the desire and expectation of future good, yet, as in hope there is usually some degree of doubt and uncertainty, the state of mind with which glorified spirits contemplate and anticipate future good may be an undoubting certainty, excluding the restlessness of desire and the anxiety of expectation.

In the hour of death, the believer closes the conflict with his spiritual enemies, enters a world where no foe shall ever exist, and where, of course, he no longer needs either defensive or aggressive weapons. He takes off the helmet of salvation, for hope is not needed when he is

brought to full possession: he lays aside the shield of faith, for seeing and knowing have succeeded to believing, and he will be beyond the fiery darts of the wicked one: the breast-plate of sincerity he retains, not as a weapon, but as an ornament; not as a means of defence, but as a memorial of victory: his feet are no longer shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, for he will no more have to tread on the snares of the destroyer, nor be exposed to his missiles: the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, shall be sheathed: praying will cease, where there is no want to be supplied, no care to be alleviated, no sin to be forgiven, no sorrow to be soothed: watchfulness will no more be necessary, for where no enemy is found, no danger arises: the means of grace will all be useless, where grace is swallowed up in glory: submission will never be called for, where there are no trials: and even many of the properties of love itself will seem to be absorbed in its general principle: many of its modifications and operations will cease, surrounded as it will be by perfect excellence and happiness: for there can be no forgiveness of injuries where none will be inflicted; no long-suffering where there is nothing to suffer; no concealment of faults where none can be committed; no self-denial where there will be nothing to try us: nothing of love will remain, nothing be exercised, but a pure and unmixed delight in happiness. And how should it stimulate us to the exercise of mutual forbearance and commiseration now, to consider that this is the only state where these virtues can be indulged!

CHAPTER XVIII.

IMPROVEMENT BY WAY OF INSTRUCTION.

Adopting the method pursued by the old divines, I shall take up this part of the subject in the way of Instruction.

1. May we not infer from it, the divine origin of those Scriptures which give such a pre-eminence to the duty of love? The contents of the Word of God have ever been considered, and very justly, as a voucher for its divine authority. The Bible is its own witness: the sublimity of its doctrines, surpassing alike the invention and the comprehension of the human understanding; the harmony of its writers; the grandeur of its style, the more remarkable if we consider the illiterate character of many of those who wrote it; the elevation and purity of its morality, especially when contrasted with the condition of the world at the time when it was written; the view it gives us of the nature and attributes of the Deity, of the character of Jesus Christ, and the state of human nature, of the scheme of redemption, of the elements of evangelical piety, of the certainty and glory of immortality; all show the handwriting of Jehovah, and together proclaim it, "The Word of God." Where is anything like it among the

works of men? Could ignorance have devised a system so sublime, or depravity a scheme so holy? But to go no further than the subject I am now considering, which may be regarded as not only a single precept of morality, but as the spirit of the whole, is it conceivable that such a generous and self-denying system of duty could have sprung from the selfishness of human nature? Would man, had he been left to the mere exercise of his reason, and the impulses of his heart, ever have summed up all morality and social obligation in the one word, love, and have represented that as the essence of virtue? Is there anything analogous to this in any human system with which we are acquainted?

Examine paganism, both ancient and modern, and what of this spirit do you find in its multiform varieties? Was benevolence, as has been already asked, ever embodied in an idol? Was a temple, a statue, or an altar ever raised to its honour? Abstractions of wisdom and power, and some few of the sterner virtues of human nature, together with many of its sinful passions, obtained a niche in the Pantheon; but such a virtue as that enjoined by Paul, not only was not worshipped, but would have been despised, by all classes of ancient idolaters, as diametrically opposed to those qualities in which they considered human greatness to consist. To say nothing of that spirit of cruelty which, like a demon legion, possessed tortured and convulsed the worshippers of Moloch, even the milder and classic mythology of the Greeks and Romans breathed into its votaries no spirit of universal philanthropy. The patriotism of these nations, the chivalrous self-devotedness, which is blazoned with such splendour on their history, and which still kindles such enthusiasm in the youthful

imagination, what was it but the light of a consuming fire? The patriotism of Rome and Greece, in their best and purest days, was but a selfishness of the most destructive kind, which would have trampled down pure philanthropy with indignant scorn, as a mean and cowardly spirit, a traitor against the absorbing glory of Athens or the Roman commonwealth. Those proud and haughty patriots thought that the world was made for them, and cared not how they invaded the rights of other nations, so that they could strengthen their own power; nor what misery they inflicted, so that they could extend their own fame. Selfishness the most engrossing was the soul of their system: every man considered himself as identified with his country; and, in contending for its honour, was fighting for his own aggrandizement. Had love been in the ascendant in those ages, the world would never have been made to lie prostrate at the feet of Alexander or of Cæsar. Who among the poets sang the praises of universal benevolence: who among the legislators made it the basis of morals: who among the philosophers expatiated on its glories, or laid upon the consciences of their disciples the obligation to cultivate it? The highest virtue of paganism was martial prowess. Heathendom knew no such benevolence as is contained in the sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" or if any sentiment, distantly analogous to that, was found in it, it was a borrowed light, the dim reflection of the distant brightness of divine truth.

And as to modern paganism, I need not say how vain it is to seek for universal love amidst the ferocities of the American Indians, the murderous cruelties of the South Sea Islanders, the disgusting selfishness and

ridiculous vanity of the Chinese, or the insulting and degrading oppression of the Hindoos.

Next turn your attention to Mohammedanism; and in what page of the Koran will you find, I will not say, such a description, and such an enforcement, of philanthropy as we have in this chapter; but where do you find any recognition of the principle? In all those pretended revelations from heaven, of which it makes Gabriel to have been the bearer, where is there such a description of Deity as this, "God is love!" or such a sentiment as that which arises out of it, "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him?" So far from recognising this principle, Islamism condemns and forbids it. It enjoins almsgiving, it is true, and gives it a high place amongst its virtues, but this is not the same as love, and may be often carried to a great extent without it. This system of imposture enforces only minute and ridiculous ceremonies, and a slavish regard to absurd ritual observances, while it inspires, and indeed is founded upon, the most ferocious and bloodthirsty hatred of all who do not receive it with implicit faith. Wars against all infidels are not only enjoined in many passages of the Koran, but are declared to be in a high degree meritorious in the sight of God. How completely Islamism has filled its votaries with the most ferocious bigotry and the most merciless intolerance, is known by universal testimony. They everywhere pour insulting contempt upon all who are not Mussulmans, and feel a savage delight in adding cruelty to insult. "Infidel dogs," is their usual name for Christians. The spirit of the system is everywhere visible in the absolute despotism of the governments of those countries in which it prevails: where it is found, the arts and the

sciences do not flourish, and liberty withers in its shade. The flaming scimitar of the Sultan is its patron and defender; it was propagated by the sword, it is supported by the bow-string, and it is essentially and unalterably cruel. Such is Islamism: a curse to the world, a mystery in the divine government, a dreadful obstacle to the spread of Christianity, and the reverse of all that is holy and beneficent in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Infidelity, it is true, has attempted an imitation of this virtue, but infidels have had revelation to copy from; and even with this model before their eyes, have produced a caricature, instead of a facsimile. The universal benevolence of this school is at war with the private affections and individual tenderness; that of Christianity springs out of them, and is founded upon them. I contend, therefore, that this noble, generous, and useful disposition is one of the peculiarities of revealed truth. Whence, but from heaven, could it have proceeded, and who, but Jehovah, either could or would have given it the authority of a law? Whoever will reflect for a moment, will be struck with the singularity of the fact that the Bible resolves the whole of practical religion into love to God, and the whole of morality into love to man. Is this, I ask again, the work of human invention, or does it look like the production of imposture? Would the selfishness of man have devised such a system; for where, among all his handiwork, do we find anything like it? O no! It is a part of the superscription of heaven, it is the impress of divinity, it is the seal of truth.

2. We learn, that the spirit of true religion is not only unlike, but opposed to the characters most admired

by the people of the world. The character which the historian loves to delineate, on which he delights to exhaust the stores of his genius, and to lavish the richest colouring of his pencil; which he is most pleased to exhibit to the admiration of his readers; and in which, with an eager sympathy, those readers take as much delight as did the author, perusing it again and again, till the soul glows with enthusiasm, is not the meek and virtuous prince, who is intent only on the arts of peace, and the internal welfare of his kingdom, but the ambitious hero, who fills the world with the fame of his victories, and by the aid of dauntless courage, consummate skill, and inordinate lust of dominion, goes on from conquering to conquer: this is the man for whom the admiration of posterity is claimed; whose crimes are lost sight of in the splendour of his genius; and whose cruelty is forgotten in the success with which it is followed. Thus it is that under the power of a peculiar fascination, demons are worshipped in sight of the miseries they have inflicted, and within hearing of the groans they have extorted, merely on account of the vast talents they possess, and of their power to curse the children of men. But the New Testament lavishes no encomiums on such men and ascribes no glory to their deeds, but treats them as the bitterest enemies of human happiness. The sword of conflict and the laurel of victory are not among the objects that it commends to our attention, but it devotes them to our detestation: the peacemaker is the character on which it bestows all its praises, and which it invests with its richest honours.

If we descend from national affairs to the more confined range of social intercourse, we shall find the same

perversion of judgment, the same misconception of true excellence, and the same misplaced admiration of sin. What is the character which is usually most applauded in fashionable circles, and also by the generality of mankind, whether rich or poor? Is it not the high-spirited individual who is quick to discern offence and bold to resent it; who will allow no one with impunity to tread upon the skirt of his dignity or his right; who is, perhaps, in some things, frank, generous, and affable; but under this exterior conceals a proud spirit, which can brook neither a superior nor a rival, but is ever aspiring to distinction; who is courteous, but ambitious; who would not willingly and intentionally give offence, but having given it, would feel himself for ever disgraced by displaying humility, and asking forgiveness; who would give alms to the needy, but not precedence even to the deserving; is not this the most admired of the world's favourites? Is not revenge dignified by the name of honour, and pride called spirit? In short, are not the qualities generally admired by men, of the active, irascible, and ambitious kind; and are not the meek, gentle, and passive virtues looked upon with disesteem, and treated with contempt? Is poverty of spirit, is humility, is self-abasement, is the forgiveness of insults, is patience under provocation, admired, applauded, imitated? Is it to the character formed of these graces, that the silent homage of the heart, and the loud praises of the tongue, are paid? Quite the contrary. The men who would practise these things, must make up their minds to endure the world's scorn, and to be treated as poor tame-spirited creatures, who deserve all the contumely they receive, because of their forbearance in submitting to it: and yet this is

the spirit of religion, for this is the temper of Jesus. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he found it full of the notion that human glory consisted in ambition, pride, and resentment; the Jew and the Gentile participated in the sentiment, and hence he took particular pains to correct this notion, giving, in his Sermon on the Mount, a delineation of character the very opposite of this. Indeed, the design of that sermon was to rectify the mistakes then universally prevalent on the subject of character and of happiness, and to teach the world that his disciples were to be pre-eminently distinguished by humility, penitence, meekness, purity, peaceableness, forgiveness, thirsting after righteousness; these are the qualities of a true Christian, and every one who bears the character must sedulously cultivate its appropriate dispositions, and be willing to brave the ridicule to which they will expose him. He must never seek to conciliate the favour of the unconverted, by imitating their spirit, or disguising his own; but bear their scorn, and wait with patience for a world where humility and meekness will be honoured and rewarded, and love, their parent disposition, be crowned with glory.

3. This subject shows us that religion is exceedingly difficult. It is a very common supposition that it is an easy thing to be a Christian. And if to be a Christian is nothing more than going to a place of worship, indulging in pious emotions, subscribing to religious institutions, and professing certain religious opinions, the supposition would be correct; for nothing is more easy than this: but if the spirit of religion is the disposition described in this chapter, then it must be obvious to every one who knows his own heart, that it is the most difficult thing in the world. The Scriptures

everywhere represent true piety by terms, allusions, and figures which imply the greatest effort, and the most persevering labour; we are commanded to "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us;" "to labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life;" to "fight the good fight of faith;" to "mortify the deeds of the body;" to "crucify the flesh." What terms! what ideas! what metaphors! Can anything that is easily accomplished require or justify the use of such language? If it were a light thing to be a Christian, could the sacred writers with any propriety have employed such strong and very expressive figures? Nothing, surely, can more impressively teach us the absolute and indispensable necessity of incessant as well as vigorous effort. The course of a sinner is down hill. "Easy," says Virgil, "is the descent to hell:" a transgressor has nothing to do but to give himself up to the indulgence of his corruptions, and he will slide without effort to perdition. Not so the saint. Heaven, by an appropriate figure of speech, is represented as on a high eminence, which cannot be reached without constant and laborious climbing. Not that all this is necessary to merit heaven, but to reach it: we are justified by faith without works, and become entitled to eternal life exclusively by the righteousness of Christ; nor are we to conceive of the faith by which we receive this righteousness, as consisting of any violent strivings of our minds, but as a simple dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, for acceptance with God: but I am speaking of the Christian temper, of practical religion, of sanctification, of going on through all the trials and

temptations of life, to the possession of that crown of glory which Christ has merited for us; and if this be easy work, there is nothing difficult.

4. Religion is a comparatively rare thing among men. This is indeed a melancholy and a painful reflection; for it is saying in other words, there are but few that are saved. It is applying to our own times the awful language employed by our Lord as descriptive of the state of things in his days upon earth, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Tremendous, and truly dreadful is the idea, that the greatest part of mankind are moving towards the bottomless pit, and sinking daily in crowds to the miseries of perdition. Such a sentiment ought not to be admitted to the mind, except upon the clearest evidence; neither ought it to be uttered by the lip, much less be recorded by the pen, except with a view to lessen the havoc which it describes, by disturbing the delusion which is the cause of this extensive ruin.

It is evident, if the Word of God be true, that no man can be saved without religion; and that the religion which does not include love, is, in fact, no religion at all: the only enquiry then to be answered is, Does Christian love abound, or is it comparatively rare? Is the great mass of human beings around us actuated by a spirit of universal benevolence, a benevolence which is the fruit of regeneration, and the effect of faith; which springs from love to God, and is cherished by a sense of redeeming grace; which is exercised in obeience to the divine authority, and with a view to the divine glory; which, in its operations, is full of forbear-

ance and meekness, kindness, candour and sympathy, humility and disinterestedness? Is this the prevailing disposition of the bulk of mankind? Do we see it manifested in the intercourse of society? Alas! alas! instead of this, do we not still see those passions in operation which the apostle mentions as descriptive of the conduct of mankind to each other in his day. "For we ourselves were sometimes disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Are not anger, malice, revenge, selfishness, envy, pride, censoriousness, the predominant dispositions in the generality of mankind? Who can deny this, or who will attempt to deny it? And if this be the case, religion must be comparatively rare. Few, indeed, are living in the exemplification of Christian love. Dreadful, tremendous idea! I tremble as I write, my soul is distressed, and groans with anguish over my own statements. I would disbelieve them, if I could; and, even believing them, I would shut them up in my own bosom, if it were not necessary to promulgate them, in order to detect that delusion which, by leading men to think that it is an uncommon thing for souls to be lost, makes it a still rarer occurrence for them to be saved. I must come to the conclusion, for I cannot help it, without becoming an infidel, that there are, in our time, many more who perish, than are saved. "Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their pomp, and their multitude, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." Reader, let the dreadful announcement, that it is a rare thing to be saved, startle you like thunder from your slumbers, and lead you to institute the most serious,

and solemn, and impartial examination of your heart. Do not rest satisfied with a mere vague idea of religion, or a mere general, careless assumption that you are a Christian. Without such a disposition as that we have considered, you have no religion; and without religion, you must perish eternally. You have, perhaps, been a professor of religion, and have approved a gospel ministry, and have enjoyed the light and advantages of gospel ordinances; but this will only aggravate your guilt, and condemnation, and misery: if you are not living under the influence of love, you are living without religion, and must have your doom with those of whom it is said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

5. We learn the great criminality of many things still remaining, and in some degree connived at, among professors of religion. National antipathies are too often found in considerable strength in the minds of Christians, especially in a time of warfare. Mistaking the nature of patriotism, and thinking, as did the ancient Greeks and Romans, that love for our country implies hatred of every rival nation, we are too apt to imbibe the spirit of the times and places in which we live, and to cherish a feeling of ill-will towards our national competitors. The religion of the New Testament is by no means hostile to a spirit of pure and sublime patriotism; that patriotism which seeks to exalt a nation by all the arts of peace, the discoveries of science, the inventions of fancy, the diffusion of knowledge, morality, and religion: but the thirst of conquest, the love of aggrandisement, the lust of domination, which would make us dislike a nation because it limits our power and resists our aggressions, is an unchristian

feeling, and an offence against the law of love. From every thing which would flatter the pride, excite the ambition, exasperate the anger, or increase the irritability of our own nation; from every thing that would swell the current of its prejudice against another country, we should carefully abstain: we should have no national enemies, no enmities and aversions excited by the geographical divisions of the globe. We should remember that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the earth, and therefore that all men are our brothers, and should be loved as brothers. A Christian is, in one sense, a citizen of the world, and although he was born in England, should abhor the thought of an hereditary dislike to an American or a Frenchman. When national passions are roused and incensed, he is to bear no part in the widely circulating hatred; and amidst much that he may regret and condemn, is still to remember that he is not to be "easily provoked."

Allied to this is the passion for war. Whether the abstract principle of the unjustifiableness of war in every case, be tenable, I will not now discuss; but that war, as it is usually carried on, is utterly indefensible on Christian principles, can admit of no question. It is but too evident, that nominal and even great numbers of real Christians are not duly impressed with the deep criminality and great enormity of the warlike spirit. Instead of bearing their testimony, by all proper means, and on every suitable occasion, against it, they partake of the general and murderous enthusiasm; they cherish the same antipathies, are actuated by the same revengeful, proud, ambitious spirit, as the people of the world; defend by argument the wars that arise, as just

and necessary; read with as much avidity the details of battles; boast with as much exultation of the victories which are obtained; and enter as deeply into all the ardour of the hostile passion, as though they were the worshippers of Mars, the god of war, instead of Jehovah, the God of love. Ought these things to be? Are they not a manifest and flagrant violation of all their principles and professions? The whole substance, genius, and tendency of Christianity, is pacific. The God whom we worship delights in mercy, and is infinitely benevolent; the character of Christ, who is our example, no less than our atonement, is formed of all the meek and gentle virtues, in the greatest perfection; the scheme of salvation is a plan of grace; all the doctrines of revelation unite in their tendency to soften and sweeten the temper; while the precepts of Christian morality forbid wrath, anger, malice, revenge of every kind or degree, and enjoin us, in no case to render evil for evil, but ever to return good for evil. The New Testament is directly opposed to that rage and resentment to which the world has given the delusive names of spirit and a sense of honour, and from which wars and contentions proceed. To these haughty and mischievous sensibilities, which are but an imitation of the passions that rage in full force in the natures of brute animals, the religion of Jesus Christ offers all the resistance of divine authority. Let any man think of the crimes committed, and the miseries inflicted, by a single battle, and surely if he has ever read one of the Gospels, or one of the Epistles, he must be convinced that a hatred of war is an essential feature of practical religion. But I need go no further than this chapter to prove that the warlike passion, even in the least

degree, is opposed to Christianity: for if love were universally prevalent, swords would be beaten into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks. It is high time for the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, in every part of the world, to study the genius of their religion, since in the knowledge of this, many of them are still lamentably deficient. It is a shame upon what is called the Christian world, that it has not long since borne universal, impassioned, and indignant testimony against that enormous evil which still rages, not only among the savages of Africa, or of the back settlements of America, but among the scholars, the philosophers, the Christians, the divines of Europe. In vain, so far as regards the diffusion of a pacific spirit, has science enlightened the mind; in vain has learning softened the manners, and cultivated the taste; in vain has art multiplied the comforts; in vain has even religion established the faith, and in some measure sanctified the minds, of the inhabitants of Christendom: for war, horrid, destructive, bloody war, is as much practised, and as much defended, as ever. Whatever men have learnt, they have not learnt to love one another: whatever attainments they have made in knowledge, they have made scarcely any in charity; however high they may have soared above the savage into the heights of science, they are still nearly upon his level in a taste for war. But real Christians should come out, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing: let them act upon their own principles, and become not only the friends, but the advocates of peace: let them echo back in their several spheres the angel's description of Christianity, "Peace on earth, good will to men:" let ministers, from the pulpit, writers, from the press, private

Christians, in their intercourse with each other and with the world, inculcate a fixed and irreconcilable abhorrence of war: let the church of God be a society for the diffusion of the principles of universal peace.

Love forbids the indulgence of sectarian prejudice. God has for wise ends, no doubt, permitted the existence of various and conflicting opinions among real Christians: but, unhappily, instead of making these differences occasions of practising mutual forbearance, and opportunities for showing through what interposing mediums Christians can press to recognise and embrace each other; instead of converting them into tests of the sincerity, and proofs of the strength of our attachment, we have permitted them to rise up into separating walls, which divide and alienate our hearts from each other. Perhaps, even towards those whose errors are too fundamental to allow us to acknowledge them as fellow-Christians, much less to hold communion with them in the bond of church-fellowship, there is not enough of genuine charity; for is there not something of bitterness and contempt, of wrath and ill-will, instead of that deep compassion and tender pity with which their situation should ever be viewed?

But as to those that agree with us in all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and differ from us only on the forms of church government, on the mode or subject of a sacrament, or on some of the minor points of doctrine; surely, surely, towards them we should maintain the full force of brotherly affection, without allowing our differences to interrupt for a moment the exercise of the most entire good-will. I would indulge a hope that in this age there is a nearer approximation than formerly, of the various

denominations of Christians to each other; that the spirit of intolerance is dying away; that there is a greater disposition to recognize each other, in the fullest sense of the term, as members of the same body, and brethren in the same family: but even yet, there is too much of the odium theologicum remaining among ministers, and too much of the spirit of party among laymen; too much of the feeling of rivalry and suspicion; too much disposition to misconstrue actions, to arraign motives; too much inclination to envy and jealousy. It is too common for the ministers and members of the Establishment to look with haughty contempt, and to speak as they feel, towards those who secede from the church; and to revile them as troublesome schismatics, as rebels against established authority, who are actuated by a love of change, an impatience of restraint, a rage for democratic principles, a disaffection to the constitution of their country. But is this charity? Does this accord with the spirit of Paul in the chapter we are now considering? May it not be that the reasons of dissent appear in our eyes to have all the force of a divine law? May not those things which appear to be matters of indifference to our accusers, appear to be matters of importance to us? Can it not be supposed that, as moral questions are differently discerned by good men, there may not be all that obliquity in our views, which is sometimes ascribed to them? Let the greater names of our denomination be read over, and especially let their immortal productions be perused; and then let it be said, whether they have not minds as capacious, learning as profound, piety as ardent, penetration as acute, as can be found among those from whom they have seceded; and whether this array of names,

supported and adorned as it is by all that can give sanctity or dignity to human nature, should not be enough to secure for us the exercise of Christian candour. May we not be Christians, and if so, ought we not to be loved as Christians? On the other hand, let the members of Protestant dissenting communities exercise a spirit of holy liberality towards their brethren of the Establishment; let them cease from resolving their episcopal predilections into a mere love of wealth and power; let them believe it possible that churchmen may have consciences as tender, and desires as fervent, as their own, to know and do the will of God; let them not conclude that clergymen are necessarily the willing slaves of tory statesmen, a mere corps of janizaries in black, to guard the throne, and defend the prerogative of kings; let them suppose that love to Christ, and zeal for God, and benevolence for man, may burn as brightly and as purely upon the altar of the Establishment, as upon their own; let them not cease, openly, manfully, and on all suitable occasions, to state and enforce their principles, but cease to state them with a spirit of acrimony and wrath; let not the ashes of the martyrs be gathered up, to blacken the descendants in office, but not the descendants in spirit, of those by whom the martyr's pile was fired; let them not visit the sins of the bigots of a past age, upon the ecclesiastical rulers of the present; let them in all their statements, since they believe they have the truth on their side, throw over it the lovely and attractive charm of meekness; let them read the names and the works of the mitred and unmitred authors belonging to the English Church, and say if genuine Christian kindness should not be cherished towards such men. Love throws

herself between the two parties, like one of the Sabine women of antiquity, claiming relation to both sides, calling for a truce to prejudice, and for the return of the sword to its scabbard. Let us consider how many, and how important, are the points on which we unite. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." We may certainly find, in these seven unities, a sufficient bond of union, a sufficient ground of love, and a sufficient scope for our sympathy, whatever varieties on other subjects may distinguish us from each other.

Let it not be thought from what has been said that it is only by Churchmen and Dissenters, in their opposition to each other, that the law of love is violated; for it must be confessed and regretted that it is not always observed as it should be, by the various sections of the latter body. Baptists, Pædo-baptists, and Methodists, are all too often actuated by a degree of envy, jealousy, and selfishness, utterly unworthy of the great cause of religion, and altogether at variance with their common principles. What attempts are sometimes made by the Wesleyans to raise a prejudice against Calvinism and its adherents, by deformed, horrid, and ferocious-looking caricatures of that system; and, on the other hand, how often are the whole body of Methodists condemned by Calvinists, as upholding all the errors of Pelagius! Baptists pour unmeasured contempt on infant baptism, and are repaid by their opponents in ridicule on adult immersion. Statements are often given of the sentiments of a sect, which that sect would deny, and consequences deduced from them, which they would abhor.

And then, what clashing of interests frequently takes place when a new denomination is introduced into a town or village! Sometimes this introduction takes place without occasion for it; there is really no room for another body of Christians; the existing means of public instruction are already sufficient, both as to quantity and quality; and, in this case, to be animated by such a zeal for our denomination, as to set it up at the certain hazard, and especially with the very hope, of dividing a prevailing and hitherto peaceful body of Christians, is a display of party spirit hateful in the last degree: men may call it zeal for the glory of God; but call it what they will, it is, when exhibited in its own deformity, nothing but envy, or the selfishness which seeks its own. In other cases, what jealousy and ill-will have been stirred up in the minds of an existing religious body, by an attempt made by another congregation to establish itself in the same place! It signified nothing how large was the place, how great the population, how inadequate the means of religious instruction: all this was left out of view: and the new denomination, though they preached the gospel in its purity, was opposed and disliked, because it came into a field where there was already an evangelical body, though that body could not be said to have occupied more than one little nook or corner of the uncultivated land. It would be invidious to name any denomination as having manifested most of this spirit; no one, perhaps, is altogether free from it; but I have known, in some instances, such wretched, paltry, nay wicked means resorted to; such attempts to oppose the new comers, by defaming their principles, by insinuating charges against their ministers, by throwing suspicions

even over the purposes of their private meetings; such a system of espionage, by sending spies to gather something to cavil at from the discourses of their opponents, as they choose to call them; such a series of kidnapping tricks to draw away the young and unwary; that I have felt it somewhat difficult, in witnessing this absence of Christian love in others, to retain it in exercise in my own heart towards them. Instead of indulging such envy, jealousy, and ill-will, all denominations who agree in the fundamental truths of the Gospel, should regard and hail each other as only so many companies in the same regiment, or so many labourers in the same field, or so many workmen in the same building, having one common object, and serving under one common head. But alas! alas! no rival companies of a secular nature can be more jealous of each other than some congregations of professing Christians are. This remark does not apply so much to the larger bodies to be found in great towns and cities, as to the smaller ones existing in less populous places. But we have all too much prejudice, and too little Christian affection for each other. We all need more of the mind of Christ. I do not wish to see a spirit of indifference to our distinctive opinions; this would be a sin in the other extreme: but I desire to behold a more cordial good will and confidence towards those who differ from us, and far, far less of the spirit of sects and parties.

Love would soften the asperity, and remove the acrimony, of controversy. I am not an enemy to well-conducted controversy. As long as the truth is attacked, it must be defended: and as long as error exists, it must be assailed. To give up the truth for the sake of peace, is a conspiracy against the Bible, and establishing a

covenant with the enemies of the Lord. Not an iota of God's Word must be surrendered to error and infidelity. We must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints:" and resist, if needs be, unto bonds, imprisonment, and death. A hollow, fawning, parasitical spirit, which would conciliate the friendship of men disaffected to the Scriptures, by giving up, or treating lightly, any of their contents, has the curse of heaven upon it. "Controversy is the safety valve of theological zeal. The spirit of party is opposed to it, being too intolerant for discussion. Truth has always triumphed by means of controversy: she has grown powerless only when the sleep of lethargy has stolen upon the church. What is Christianity itself, but a standing controversy with the infidel, the sensualist, the formalist, and the men of the world? We admit that the spirit of controversy, or, to speak more properly, the controversial spirit, is not, in itself, very conducive to the cultivation of personal piety. The angry controvertist and fierce polemic is not always a devout believer or an amiable member of society. The church has been sometimes as much disgraced by her advocates, as annoyed by her assailants: and there are intestine debates and disputes, which, as friends to religion, as well as friends to peace, we could wish to have terminated for ever. But alive, as we trust we are, to the dangers of controversy, we must, nevertheless, protest against that timid, trimming, self-indulgent, ultra-liberal dread of religious debate, which would bind over truth to keep the peace with error, and consign those celestial weapons of the spiritual armoury, reason and Scripture, to the ark of the church, as useless regalia."*

* Eclectic Review.

It is highly probable that controversy will never entirely cease, till truth stands revealed amidst the light of eternity. But there will come a period when men will discuss their differences in the spirit of brotherly affection; when, perhaps, there will be fewer points unsettled, and those few will be debated with candour and mutual esteem. Too many, in their disputations about religion, contend for truth till they have destroyed love; and even, in reference to the former, present it in so mutilated a form, as to deprive it of much of its own engaging beauty.

Luther's prayer should be presented by all: "From frivolous, fruitless controversies, good Lord, deliver us." It is well observed by an old writer, that "Disputations in religion are sometimes necessary, but always dangerous; drawing the best spirits into the head from the heart, and either leaving it empty of all, or too full of fleshly zeal and passion, if extraordinary care be not taken still to supply and fill it anew with pious affection towards God, and love towards man." There is no case in which good men are more under the power of the deceitfulness of the heart, than when engaged in religious controversy; and when, under the idea that they are only "contending earnestly for the faith," they indulge in all kinds of unhallowed tempers, dip their pens in gall, deliberately write, as deliberately print, and no less deliberately justify, the bitterest sarcasms, the severest irony, the most railing accusations, the grossest personalities, the most uncharitable surmises; in short, when, as the controversy is about religion, (a circumstance which ought to produce a spirit directly the reverse), there is no degree of abuse, reviling, and defamation, to which they do not have

recourse. Such has been too often the tone of religious controversy, according to which it would seem as if the graces were mere heathen courtezans, in whose company a Christian should blush to be found; while the furies were so many personifications of holy zeal, whose assistance is to be solicited in the support of truth. Oh, what a handle has the spirit of angry controversy given to infidels against the whole system of revelation! They have fought against Christianity with poisoned arrows, and the gall of furious polemics has supplied the venom in which they have dipped their sarcasms, ironies, and jests. It is high time that the apostle's exhortation should be practically remembered: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" that all who contend for the faith should remember Paul's advice to Timothy, "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." The wrath of man in no instance works the righteousness of God. Let any one read this chapter, and say if it be possible to justify the spirit in which contentions for the truth are generally carried on. Let it not be pleaded that we are commanded to rebuke sharply, as if this furnished an apology for uncharitableness; for duties cannot be in opposition to each other, and therefore even this must be performed in a manner that is compatible with meekness and love. Unfortunately, the spirit of acrimonious controversy is as popular as it is sinful: the pugnacious hierophants, by whom it is carried on, are generally the leaders of parties, which think themselves happy in representa-

tives, who with their shields can defend them, and with their tremendous swords can vanquish their enemies, and lead them on to victory and supremacy. It would be amusing, if it were not too serious a matter for entertainment, to hear how each party exults in the exploits of its redoubtable Hercules; and to see how securely it reposes under the protection of his terrible and far-resounding club. What deep disgrace is it upon the professors and teachers of the religion of the lowly Saviour, to suppose that his doctrines and his precepts require the aid of unhallowed passions to give them effect.

I may next exhibit the criminality which attaches to the sin of schism, and deplore its prevalence. It will be necessary to explain here what I mean by schism. No term has been more employed, or more abused than this: it has furnished bigots of all parties with a theme of angry declamation, and a subject of bitter accusation and reproach, against all who differ from them in opinion, upon whatever ground, or in whatever spirit, that difference is maintained. Papists charge this sin upon Protestants; while the Church of England, in its turn, attempts to fasten the guilt of it upon all who secede from her communion. It is bandied with eagerness from one denomination to another as a term of ignominy, and is continually calling into exercise some of the worst passions of human nature. Papal bulls, episcopal charges, clerical sermons, party-spirited journals, are continually harping upon it; and multitudes, who have no other means of blackening an opponent, think that they cannot succeed in representing him as guilty and odious more effectually than by calling him a schismatic. I will at once confess, that schism

is, indeed, when properly imputed, a sin of so enormous a kind, that too much cannot be said in its condemnation. But it is not properly imputed. In its etymological signification, it means a rent, a division, a separation of that which was originally one.*

Campbell's remarks are so clear and convincing on this subject, that they may with great propriety be referred to. As breach, or rupture, is the literal import of the term in our language, whenever these words may be figuratively applied, the term schism seems likewise capable of an application. It invariably supposes that among the things whereof it is affirmed, there subsisted an union formerly, and as invariably denotes that the union subsists no longer. In this manner the apostle Paul uses the word, applying it to a particular church, or Christian congregation. Thus he adjures the Corinthians, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that there be no divisions, or schisms, among them: and in another place of the same Epistle, "I hear that there are divisions," or schisms. In order to obtain a proper idea of what is meant by a breach, or schism, in this application, we must form a just notion of that which constituted the union which was violated by the schism. Now the great and powerful cement which united the souls of Christians, was their mutual love. Their hearts, in the emphatic language of Holy Writ, were knit together in love. This had been declared by their Master to be the distinguishing badge of their profession: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Their partaking the same baptism, their professing the same faith, their enjoying the same promises, and their joining in the same re-

* Matthew ix, 16. John vii, 43.

ligious services, formed a connexion merely external, and of little significance, unless, agreeably to the apostle's expression, it was rooted and grounded in love. And therefore, whatever alienates the affections of Christians from one another, is manifestly subversive of the great distinction of the Christian character, and the foundation of Christian unity, and may, with the greatest truth and energy, be denominated schism. It is not so much what makes an outward separation (though this also may be so denominated), as what produces alienation of heart, which constitutes schism in the sense of the apostle; for that strikes directly at the vitals of Christianity. Indeed, both the evil and the danger of external separation, are principally to be estimated from its influence in producing an alienation of heart; for it is in the union of affection among Christians, that the spirit, the life, and the power of religion are principally placed.

Wherever an alienation of heart takes place, and whatever be the occasion of it, whether there be an external separation or not, there is a schism. It may arise, and has, perhaps, arisen in the Church of England, in the divisions characterised by the terms evangelical and anti-evangelical; not, indeed, that these terms are recognised by that church, but the distinctions of which they are the designations certainly exist in it; or it may and does exist in the church of Scotland, in the same way as in the sister church of the south; it arose in the church of Rome, that boasted seat of unity and infallibility, in the contest between the Jansenists and the Jesuits; and it may arise, and alas, we know to our shame and distress, it does too often arise, in our Independent churches; so that without any actual and

visible separation or secession, this dreadful evil may be in full and mischievous operation. On the contrary, there may be a diversity of opinion in a society, without any schism, as in those Baptist churches that admit of mixed communion; and provided there be no alienation of heart, no interruption to mutual esteem and good will, there may be even an external separation, without schism. This sin can have no existence except in those cases where the unity of the spirit is disturbed, and the bond of peace is severed. As long as sincere love remains, there is not schism, in the full sense of the terms. Consequently, whatever tends to alienate the hearts of Christians from each other, whatever tends to produce discord, whatever tends to stir up strife, no matter who may be guilty of such conduct, is the very essence of this hateful vice. If men will attempt to coerce the conscience, by legislating for others in such matters as those of religion, and interfere, by human authority, in affairs which lie between God and the soul, they must be answerable for the divisions which arise from the conscientious objections of persons who cannot submit to such enactments. If to separate peaceably from the Church of England, be the sin of schism, how will the Church of England justify itself from the same charge brought against her by the Church of Rome? The schismatic is not he who peaceably secedes: but he who renders secession necessary, by setting up requirements with which the separatist cannot comply without violating his conscience. Not that I mean to say that Episcopalians, or the supporters of any established religion whatever, are schismatical, unless where their conduct is calculated to produce alienation: but neither, on the other hand, are dissenters justly chargeable with this

sin, unless their conduct can be proved to be founded on a factious spirit of ill-will towards the religious establishment of the country. It is no argument that their dissent proceeds on insufficient grounds, and their objections to the Church as by law established relate to things indifferent in themselves, and are therefore frivolous and vexatious. If these matters are indifferent, why impose them? But of their indifference or importance, dissenters must judge for themselves, as the reformed churches of Christendom did of the corruptions of Popery. If a dissenter employ himself in stirring up ill-will towards the members of the Church of England, by arraigning the motives of its ministers, and charging them with sordid avarice, or a mere love of worldly pomp and domination; or by questioning the piety of its members; or by exciting animosity; or perpetuating a spirit of opposition to them in the minds of his own party; or if he so state, defend, or enforce his principles, as that the natural result in those who hear him shall be an interruption to all communion of heart, and to all exercise of mutual good will between the two denominations; if he employ himself in widening the breach between them, and repelling them further from each other; he is indeed a schismatic, and deserves all the reproach which such conduct can bring upon him. But it should be recollected that no less guilty of the sin of schism, is he who, whether he be a mitred or unmitred minister of the Established Church, employs his talents in holding up dissenters to public obloquy as a factious, troublesome, and dangerous body, seceding upon no grounds but such as are frivolous, entitled to reproach for what they have done, and to suspicion of what they may do. But quitting names and parties, schism is the

sin of doing any thing to alienate Christian men's hearts from each other, whatever be the occasion or the means of the estrangement; and a sin it is, of a magnitude and enormity which few can estimate. It is the very opposite of charity; and in saying this, I arraign it upon the most solemn and the most capital charge which any indictment can prefer. We have all, perhaps, something of it in our spirit; but little does it occur to some men, when they are advancing their charges, and fulminating their anathemas against others for the sin of schism, that, in the eye of heaven the objects of their anger are innocent of the crime that is laid to their charge, and they themselves are regarded by Him whose judgment is according to truth, as the greatest schismatics upon earth.

I cannot resist the temptation to introduce here a long, but no one who has a taste for literary or moral beauty will deem it a too long, extract from the writings of Mr Hall.

"The Gallican church no doubt looked upon it as a signal triumph, when she prevailed on Louis the Fourteenth to repeal the Edict of Nantes, and to suppress the Protestant religion. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and her Pascals: where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning, which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion for it, when there was no lustre of Christian holiness surrounding her: nor for learning, when she had no longer any opponents to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as igorant, as secular, as irreligious, as she pleased; and amidst the silence and

darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains, and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death: the feeble remains of life were extinguished, and she lay a putrid corpse, a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations. Such, there is every reason to believe, would be the effect of similar measures in England. That union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety, among all sects and parties, will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably, to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree, and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An awful fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely illuminate the path in which they are to tread. In the room of being repelled by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them

from converting every incidental variation into an impassable boundary, or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages for fear of symbolizing with another class of Christians.

"The general prevalence of piety in different communities would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? what is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles in which they concur.

"To this we may add, that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the great Head of the church, would restrain men from inventing new terms of communion, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the Word of God has left indifferent. That sense of imperfection we ought ever to cherish, would incline us to be looking up for a superior light, and make us think it not improbable that, in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way, and have much to learn and much to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party with the church would be exploded, the foolish clamour about schism hushed, and no one, however mean or inconsiderable, be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of ecclesiastical dominion. The New Testament is surely not so obscure a book that, were its contents

to fall into the hands of a hundred serious impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions as must necessarily issue in their forming two or more separate communions. It is remarkable, indeed, that the chief points about which real Christians are divided, are points on which that volume is silent; mere human fabrications which the presumption of men has attached to the Christian system. A larger communication of the Spirit of truth would insensibly lead Christians into a similar train of thinking; and being more under the guidance of that infallible Teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one community would probably be productive of much mischief: it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride acting upon indolence and fear.

"During the present disjointed state of things, then, nothing remains but for every one to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is intrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing with a firm and steady hand the heats and irruptions of party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents, in inculcating the great truths of the gospel, and endeavouring to 'form Christ' in his hearers, without blowing the flames of contention, or widening that breach which is already the disgrace and calamity of the Christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an identity in the impressions made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear; and Christians would every

where approach toward that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is composed of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms. Since they have all drank into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is wanting, but a larger portion of that spirit, to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interests, the love of power, and not the want of evidence for truth, not to the obscurities of revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among Christians: maladies which nothing can correct, but deep and genuine piety. The true schismatic is not so properly the person who declines a compliance with what he judges to be wrong, though he may be mistaken in that judgment, as the man who sedulously employs every artifice to alienate the affections of good men from each other."*

5. How desirable it is that religion should prevail more than it does. If the spirit of religion is love, who can avoid longing for its universal dominion? How much is it to be coveted for the peace of our churches! It must be confessed, with grief and shame, that Zion is not yet a "peaceful habitation;" nor do all her assemblies present the good and pleasant sight of brethren dwelling together in unity. Contentions about non-essential matters abound. The seeds of discord are plentifully sown, and bear an exuberant crop of the fruits of contention. How many religious communities are distracted, to their own injury, to the exultation of their enemies, and to the discredit of religion! Many are the causes which produce this unhappy state of things; but that which gives force to them all, is the absence or the weakness of love. This is the grand defect,

* Strictures on "Zeal without Innovation."

and other circumstances are but subsidiary to it. It is most melancholy and humiliating to discover, when some trifling disagreement occurs, what small attainments seemingly flourishing churches have made in this virtue. How insignificant is the subject over which two parties will engage with all the eagerness of contention, and how bitter the spirit with which the contention is carried on! It has been said that quarrels about religion have been usually maintained with more malevolence than any other. This I deny; but, at the same time, I must admit that they are often sustained with a measure of acrimony that is a disgrace to all concerned. The usual occasion of disageement is either the dismissal or the choice of a minister. And not unfrequently do believers wrangle about him who is to teach them religion, till they have lost the spirit of piety. But whatever may be the occasion, want of love is the cause of all feuds and strifes.

Oh! what churches we should have if Christian charity were allowed to have its full scope! The pastor would labour with the most earnest, indefatigable, and disinterested zeal for the eternal welfare of the flock, and make it evident that compassion for souls was the motive of all his conduct. Affection would beam in his eyes, and breathe in his spirit, while "the law of kindness" would dwell on his lips. He would preside over the people in the meekness of wisdom; and, instead of proudly lording it over God's heritage, he would rule them in love. He would be gentle among them, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children." Instead of being provoked by any little unintentional infringement on his rights, or disrespect to his dignity, he would bear with whatever was the

result of ignorance, and wisely and meekly expostulate in reference to whatever was the effect of impertinence. Over all his talents, however brilliant, he would put the garment of humility; and with respect to all his success, however great, he would speak in the language of modesty. He would neither envy his more gifted or successful brethren, nor proudly vaunt over his inferiors. To all his charge, even the most illiterate and obscure, he would conduct himself with the condescension of true benevolence, put the most favourable construction on the actions of his people, repose in them an honourable confidence, labour to correct their errors, whether doctrinal or practical, and have no greater joy than to see them walking in the truth.

Christian charity would also dictate a line of conduct to the people towards their minister no less pious than amiable: it would lead them to attach themselves decidedly and warmly to his person and ministry; to demonstrate in every possible way their sincere and cordial wish to promote his comfort; to abstain from every thing that would grieve his mind, and by every means in their power to promote his usefulness. It would not allow them to be offended by his faithful rebukes, but cause them to submit, with Christian frankness and humility, to his cautious admonitions and reproofs; it would lead them to interpret, in a candid manner, any little neglects, or unintentional offences; it would make willing and reasonable excuses for his seeming inattention; it would cover and not expose his infirmities, if they are such as can comport with sterling piety; it would lead them to manifest a becoming respect for his office and opinion; and whilst it would leave them in full possession of entire freedom

of thought, and manly dignity of conduct, would still prescribe that humility and reverence, which the Scriptures claim for those who are set over them in the Lord.

In the conduct of the people towards each other, love would check all that irritability which is excited by a word, that anger which is cherished till it ripens into malice or revenge. How much is the peace of our churches disturbed by such hot or sullen spirits! But did this heavenly virtue prevail, care would be taken not to give offence, and equal care would be in exercise not to take it: one man would bridle his tongue, lest he should utter words that would grieve; another would rein in his temper, lest he should be provoked when he ought not; and all would be watchful against whatever would destroy the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. If any action had been done, or any word spoken, of a doubtful kind, no one would suspect an evil motive, but rather be ready to conclude in favour of a good intention; suspicion would be displaced by mutual confidence, and hasty imputations of wrong, by the belief or hope that all was right. Instead of circulating ill reports of each other, or believing them when circulated, all would entertain too much good-will for, and too high an opinion of their brethren, to listen to an insinuation against them. Universal kindness would reign throughout the society: each would feel an interest in every thing, and by "whatsoever things are lovely," would promote the comfort, and bear the burdens of all. There would be no struggle for pre-eminence, no grasping at power: such pride would be abhorred, and all would be subject one to another: the rich would not be puffed up, nor vaunt themselves

against the poor, nor would the poor envy the rich. In a time of difficulty, such as the choice of a minister, there would be a giving up as far as possible, of individual feeling, and all would consider the general good: no one would selfishly wish to have his taste alone consulted; his opinion alone attended to; no one would obtrude his views upon the rest in an unseemly manner: but each would consult all.

I may again remark, what churches we should have if love were the ruling principle which governed them! "Then would each of them present a peaceful haven, inviting men to retire from the tossing and perils of this unquiet ocean to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade:" then would the prayer of Christ be answered, and his people be one, and afford by their unity a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist: then would the church on earth present a calm, unruffled surface, which would reflect, as from a mirror, a bright resemblance of the church in heaven. Let us, then, for the honour of our principles, for the credit of our common Christianity, for our own peace and comfort in relation to the body of the people, seek that more of this heavenly spirit may be diffused among all who are called by the name of Christ.

How desirable is it that such a religion as this should be spread over the face of the whole earth! In what a miserable condition is our globe. The whole world lies in the wicked one, is entangled in the coils and bitten by the fangs, and tortured by the venom of the old serpent, the devil. Justly has the apostle said, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain

together until now." Nearly eighteen centuries have passed since Paul saw this bleeding victim of Satan's cruelty, and heard its groans; and it is bleeding and groaning still. Wherever we go, either in reality or in imagination, we find ourselves in a vale of tears, where forms of misery, indefinitely varied, and almost innumerably multiplied, rise before our eyes, and utter nothing but "woe, woe, woe." And who can wonder that our world should thus be little else but a region of misery? Think upon the passions which predominate in human affairs; think of the vile affections, which, like furies, tyrannize over the minds of men; wrath, malice, revenge, envy, pride, suspicion, selfishness, cruelty, slander; these are the oligarchy of diabolical tempers, which usurp the dominion of the world in the name of Satan, and which with something of his power and his fury, torment the miserable children of men. How much of cruel slavery, sanguinary warfare, remorseless oppression, deadly revenge, operative mischief, crafty subtilty, insulting pride, is perpetually at work in the destruction of human happiness! The prevalence of love would put a stop to all this: it would beat the sword of war into the ploughshare of peace: it would break the galling fetter of slavery, and bid the captive go free: it would change the tyrant into a father: it would convert the venom of malice into the milk of human kindness: it would transform the crafty serpent into the innocent dove: it would tame the ferocity of the implacable assassin into clemency; and would teach him to pronounce forgiveness, who now breathes out nothing but slaughter; it would teach pride to put on humility: it would give to the vigilant eye of intelligence the expression of candour instead of the glance

of suspicion: and would substitute, for the torment of envy, the exquisite delight of that sympathy which can rejoice with those that rejoice.

What an argument for Christian missions, and what a motive to their zealous support! I have already proved that both Paganism and Mahometanism are hostile to a spirit of universal benevolence; if, therefore, the world is ever to be subjugated to the mild and beneficial dominion of charity, the conquest must be made by Christianity. And to this honour is Christianity destined: it was to this theme that the evangelical prophet struck his lyre, when he said, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more: but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid." "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the

earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Such is the poetic and beautiful description given by the prophet of the harmonising and benevolent tendency of the Gospel, as well as of its effect wherever its influence is entirely submitted to. How exceedingly is it to be desired that such a system should be universally prevalent! The awful description which the apostle gives us of the idolatry of his times, and of its demoralising effects, deeply as it is coloured, and darkly as it is shaded, is not less justly applicable to the Pagan nations of the present day, than it was to those of antiquity: "They have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." What a picture! Who can contemplate it without horror? Yet such is the state of society, such is the aspect of the moral world, such are the crimes that ever deform, pollute, and torment the human race under the reign of Paganism; which, wherever it exists, converts earth into the vestibule of hell, a den of wild

beasts, a range of malignant demons; which educates men for fiends amidst the worst of excesses of depravity, and tortures its victims in this world, preparatory to their execution in the next. Who that pretends to carry in his bosom the heart of a man, much more who that professes to have the spirit of a Christian, which is the mind of Christ, but must mourn in bitterness of soul over this frightful wilderness, and long to bring these habitations of cruelty under the reign of love?

Let it be recollected that whenever the religion of Jesus Christ is felt in its proper influence, whenever it changes the heart and sanctifies the life, it does not merely turn men away from dumb idols, but causes them also to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. It does not merely lead to a change of names, a substitution of one set of religious rites for another; but while it removes all that is impious in idolatry, it displaces all that is odious and abominable in vice. It presents the first table of the law, and says, "Thou shalt love God with all thy soul;" and then holds up the second, and commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is permitted to govern society, it banishes all that can afflict, and introduces whatever can comfort, the human race. All the crimes and the curses of society flee before it, while all the blessings of earth follow in its train: it not only brings learning, arts, and sciences, with all else that can adorn the mind and embellish life, but, as its chief benefit, it establishes the reign of charity. This it has done to a considerable extent in many places already; as even its enemies have acknowledged. And he that

would see what religion can do, has done, and will yet do, in exalting benevolence on the ruins of cruelty, and in establishing the reign of mercy, let him contemplate as he may do, through the medium of missionary reports, the once wild and savage Esquimaux converted into peaceful, harmless, and benevolent followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; or the once murderous Tahitians, who revelled in the blood of human sacrifices, and slaughtered without remorse their own children, now exhibiting a character remarkable for its mildness and gentleness; or the once marauding tribes of South Africa, casting away their poisoned arrows and their assagays, and exhibiting a moral transformation as great and striking, as if the lions that prowled around their tents were changed by miracle into lambs. And these are the triumphs of that religion, of which the many branches and the multiplied duties are summed up in that one word, Love.

Friends of humanity! by all the love you bear to God or man, I conjure you to labour to the uttermost in extending the religion you profess. Estimate, if you can, the deep guilt of neglecting the cause of Christian missions. None of you have done what you could have done, or what you ought to do, in this most sacred, most important cause. I ask, what proportion of your property ought to be put in requisition for promoting the universal reign of charity? Is a tenth, or a fifth, or a third, enough for that cause, the object of which is to teach all men that dwell on the earth to love God supremely, and each other as themselves? Enough to be given for the purpose of cementing the whole human family together in a union of affection? Enough to be

given to a cause, which, when completely victorious (and completely victorious it will be), will banish pride, and malice, and envy, and revenge, from the abodes of man? How can you live in splendour, how can you enjoy your luxuries, how can you dwell with delight upon your accumulating hoards of wealth, while so much is needed to extend the influence of religion? Alas! alas! because you have so little of it in your own soul. Christian benevolence, were it felt in its full force, would lead to self-denial, to economy, to simple habits, to personal sacrifices, in order that you might have more to spare for the great object of Christian missions. But in addition to your property, and your influence, give to the cause of missions your private, sincere, fervent, believing, and constant prayers. It is only by the power of the Divine, Omnipotent Spirit, that the kingdom of Christ can be established in this selfish world. Read the chapter which we have considered, compare with it the present state of mankind, and then say if aught but the same power which called the chaos out of nothing, and raised this fair and beautiful world out of chaos, can effect a transformation so astonishing and sublime as would be effected, if this region of dark and vengeful passions was converted into an abode of holy, mild, and benevolent affections. Beseech Jehovah daily, that he will arise and plead his own cause; for surely love must be eminently the cause of him who is infinite in goodness, and delights in mercy. Give him no rest till, in answer to believing and earnest prayer, he shall say, "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for,

behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

CHAPTER XIX.

IMPROVEMENT BY WAY OF SELF-EXAMINATION AND HUMILIATION.

Self-examination is the duty of every Christian, not merely that he may ascertain whether his faith be genuine, but whether it be sufficiently operative. It ought not to be a frequent and undecided question with any one, "Am I in reality a child of God?" but it should be a constantly recurring inquiry, "Is there any one branch of religious obligation, which, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, I do not feel; or which, through a criminal heedlessness, I habitually neglect?" The object of self-examination with a believer, is to supply those defects in his graces, and to put away those remains of his corruptions, which, though they may not prove that he has no piety, prove that he has less of it than he ought to have. For this purpose, he should often bring his actions and his motives to the standard, and try his whole life; as well what he does that he should not do, as what he does not that he should do. If we are to exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, we surely ought to examine ourselves daily for the same reason. Our guilty self-love is perpetually attempting to throw a veil over the sinful infirmities

of our nature, in order to hide their criminality from our view, and thus keep us in a state of false peace by keeping us in ignorance. Against this deceitfulness of our hearts, we can only be guarded by a frequent and close examination of our whole selves.

A frequent examination of our hearts and conduct is necessary, because of the multitude of our daily sins, which are often so minute as to escape the observation of a careless and superficial glance, and so numerous as to be forgotten from one day to another; and so they either do not come to our notice, or pass out of our recollection: and therefore they should be summed up every evening, and repented of, that they may be forgiven, before we compose ourselves to sleep, that nightly returning harbinger, monitor, and image of death. The advantages of frequent self-examination are so many and so great, as to recommend the practice strongly to all who are deeply anxious about the welfare of their souls: by this means we shall not only detect many sins which would otherwise be lost in our attention to greater ones, but we shall more easily destroy them, and more speedily revive our languishing graces; just as a wound may with greater facility be cured while it is yet fresh and bleeding, and a taper when just blown out may be rekindled, either by the near contact of another flame, or by the timely application of a little well-directed breath. "Sins are apt to cluster and combine, when either we are in love with small sins, or when they proceed from a careless and incurious spirit, into frequency and continuance; but we may easily keep them asunder by our daily prayers, and our nightly examinations, and our severe sentences; for 'he that despiseth little things,' said the son of Sirach,

'shall perish by little and little.'" A frequent examination of our actions will tend to keep the conscience so clear that the least fresh spot will be easily seen; and so tender that the least additional pressure will be felt: for that which comes upon an already blotted page is scarcely discerned, and a small addition to a heavy load is hardly felt. This, also, is the best way to make our repentance pungent and particular. But on this subject I shall have more to say presently. If self-examination is neglected for want of opportunity by those who have their time at their own command and disposal, it is plain they are far too deeply involved in the business of the world and the labyrinth of care: no man ought to allow himself to be so taken up in looking to his secular pursuits, as to have no time to look to the state of his soul; to be so greedy after gain, or so intent upon the objects of earthly ambition, as to be careless about examining whether we are growing in grace and increasing in the riches of faith and love, discovers a mind which either has no religion at all, or has reason to fear that it has none.

But besides that cursory retrospect which we should take every evening of the conduct of the day, a portion of time should be frequently set apart for the purpose of instituting a more minute and rigid inquiry into the state of our personal piety; when, taking in our hand the Word of God, we should descend with this candle of the Lord into the dark and deep recesses of the heart, enter every secret chamber, and pry into every corner, to ascertain if any thing be hiding itself there which is contrary to the mind and will of God. Many standards will be found in the Scriptures, all concurring with each

other in general purpose and principles, by which this investigation of our spirits should be conducted. I now propose the law of love as one.

On these occasions of introspection, we should inquire how far our faith is working by love. I will conceive of a professing Christian who has set apart a portion of time, say on a Saturday evening, when he is on the morrow to partake of the Lord's Supper; or on the evening of a Lord's day on which he has partaken of it; to examine not only into the state of his conduct, but the frame and temper of his spirit. He is anxious to know how far he is living so as to please God. I can imagine him, after having read the Scriptures, presenting his fervent supplications to God, in the language of the Psalmist, and saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." He now enters upon the business of self-examination; and the subject of his inquiry that evening is the temper of his heart towards his fellow-creatures, the state of his mind in reference to the law of love, to the measure of his charity, and to the infirmities of his temper. Hear his holy colloquies with himself. "I have no just reason (thanks be to sovereign grace!) to question whether I have received the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. I believe my creed is sound, nor have I any serious ground for suspecting the sincerity of my faith, or the reality of my conversion: my conduct, too, so far as the estimate of man goes, has, through the help of God, been free from immorality. Yet though I may without presumption say that I love God, I am covered with confusion that my love is so

weak and lukewarm. But my solemn business at this time is to examine into the state and measure of my Christian charity; for I am persuaded that whatever knowledge, faith, seeming raptures, or supposed communion with God, I may lay claim to, I am but a very imperfect Christian, if I am considerably deficient in love. Taking the apostolic description of this lovely virtue, I will bring my heart to the test.

"Have I then love, in his sense of the word? Is my heart a partaker of this disposition? Is the selfishness of my corrupt nature subdued, and made to give way to a spirit of universal benevolence; so that I can truly say, I rejoice in happiness, and am conscious of a continual benevolent sympathy with universal being, and of a perpetual efflux of good-will to all creatures? Do I feel as if my own happiness were receiving constant accessions from the happiness of others; and that my soul, instead of living in her own little world within, an alien from the commonwealth of mankind, indifferent to all but herself, is in union and communion with my species? In short, do I know the meaning of the apostle's emphatic expression, 'He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him?'

"But let me descend to particulars. What do I know of the forbearance of love? Can I suffer long, or am I easily provoked? Am I patient under provocation; do I restrain my anger, and keep my wrath in subjection under insults, ingratitude, and scorn? In my intercourse with my brethren in Christ, am I quick to take offence at any real or supposed slight or impertinence? Am I so jealous of my dignity, so sensitive and irritable, as to be roused to anger by any little offence, and transported to fury by any

serious provocation? Am I revengeful under injuries; brooding over them in silence, cherishing the remembrance, and reviving the recollection of them, waiting for an opportunity to retaliate, and rejoicing in the sufferings which come upon those that injure me? Or am I easily conciliated, ever forward to forgive, and ready to return good for evil? How have I acted since my last season of self-examination in these particulars? Let me call to recollection my conduct, that I may see how far I have practised the duty, and exhibited the excellence of Christian meekness.

"Charity is kind." Is kindness, universal, constant, operative kindness, characteristic of my conduct? Is the law of kindness on my lips, its smile upon my countenance, and its activity in my life? Or am I uncivil and uncourteous in speech, frowning and repulsive in my aspect, grudging and infrequent in acts of generosity? Have I the character among my neighbours and acquaintance, of a man who can be always depended upon for a favour, when it is needed? Or, on the contrary, am I by general report a very unlikely person to lend a helping hand to a person in necessity? Are there any instances of unkindness which I can now call to remembrance, which have brought dishonour upon my reputation, guilt upon my conscience, reproach upon the cause of religion, and for which, therefore, I ought to seek the pardon of God through Christ?

"Charity envieth not." Am I subject to the tormenting influence of that truly diabolical temper by which a person is made miserable in himself, and hates his neighbour or rival on account of that neighbour's or rival's superiority to him in any respect? Am I so truly infernal in my disposition as to sicken and pine at

the sight of the success or happiness of others, and to cherish ill-will on that account towards them? When I hear another praised and commended, do I feel a burning of heart within, and an inclination to detract from his fame, and to lower him in the estimation of those that applaud him; and do I secretly rejoice when any thing occurs to lessen and lower him in public opinion, or to strip him of those distinctions which render him the object of my dislike? Or do I possess that true spirit of love, which constrains me to rejoice with those that rejoice, to feel pleased with their prosperity, and to consider their happiness as an accession to my own? Have I indeed, that benevolence which delights so truly in felicity, as to make me glad at seeing it in the possession of an enemy or a rival?

"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." Is this descriptive of my spirit, in reference to my own attainments and achievements? Am I lowly in my own eyes, clothed with humility, modest in the estimate I form of myself, and all that belongs to me; or am I proud, vain, or ostentatious, valuing and admiring myself, on the ground of any personal, civil, ecclesiastical, or spiritual distinctions? Am I fond of exciting admiration, and obtaining applause? Or am I content with the approbation of my own conscience, and the smile of God? Do I wish to make others feel their inferiority, and to suffer under a mortifying sense of it? Or do I, from tender regard to their comfort, conceal, as much as possible, any superiority I may have over them; and make them easy and happy in my company? Do I indulge in haughty airs, or practise kind affability and amiable condescension?

"Charity doth not behave itself unseemly." Is it

my study not to give uneasiness and offence, by any thing unsuitable to my age, sex, rank, station, and circumstances; any thing rude, rough, impertinent, or unbecoming? Or am I continually disturbing the comfort of those around me, by indecorus and unsuitable behaviour?

"Charity seeketh not her own." Am I habitually selfish, anxious only for my own gratification, and building up my comfort to the annoyance or neglect of others? Am I indulging a penurious, avaricious disposition, feasting upon luxuries, and refusing to minister to the relief of human misery, according to the proportion in which God has blessed me? Or am I diffusing abroad my substance, considering that I am only steward of what I hold, and must account for it all? Am I overbearing and intolerant in discussion and debate, wanting others to sacrifice their views, in order that I may have every thing my own way? Or am I willing to concede and yield, and disposed to give up my own will to the general opinion, and for the general good?

"Charity thinketh no evil." Am I suspicious, and apt to impute bad motives to men's conduct? Or am I generous and confiding, prone to think the best that truth will allow? Am I censorious or candid? Do I feel more in haste to condemn than to excuse, and more eager to blame than to exculpate?

"Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." What is my disposition towards those who are my opponents? Do I delight in, or mourn over their faults? Do I so love them as to be glad when, by their regard to truth and righteousness, they raise themselves in public esteem; and to be sorry when

they injure their own cause, and give me an advantage over them by their errors and sins? Have I made that high attainment in virtue and piety, which leads me to delight in the righteousness of a rival, even when it may seem to exalt him? Or am I still so destitute of love as to say, in reference to his faults, 'Ah! so would I have it?'

"Charity covereth all things." Am I prone and anxious to conceal the failings of others, or to expose them? "Charity believeth all things." Am I credulous of whatever is to the advantage of a brother? "Charity hopeth all things." Where the evidence is not enough to warrant belief, do I indulge an expectation and desire that further knowledge may explain the matter favourably?

"Charity endureth all things." Am I willing to make any exertion, to bear any hardship, to sustain any reasonable loss, for the peace and welfare of others? Or am I so fond of ease, so indolent, so selfish, as to give them nothing but mere ineffectual wishes for their comfort and well-being?

"What measure of holy love have I, of that love which puts forth its energies in such operations as these? Do I so love God, and feel such a sense of his love to me, as to have my soul transformed into this divine temper? Does the love of Christ thus constrain me? Am I so absorbed in the contemplation of that stupendous display of divine benevolence, that unparalleled manifestation of infinite mercy, which was made in the cross of the Son of God, as to find the selfishness of my nature melted, and all its enmities subdued, by this most amazing and transporting scene? I feel that without love I cannot have entered into the

meaning and design, the moral force and beauty, of the great atonement; that I can have no disposition which properly corresponds to that august and interesting spectacle. I see that knowledge is not enough, that belief is not enough, that ecstacy is not enough, that hope is not enough; that, in fact, nothing can come up to the demands, to the spirit, to the design, of a religion which has the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for its central object, and grand support, and distinguishing glory, but a temper of universal and practical benevolence. Have I this? If so, how much of it?

Such should be the subjects of diligent and frequent examination to every professing Christian.

Humiliation should follow examination. The act of humbling and abasing ourselves before God, is a part of the duty, not only of sinners, when they make their first application to the mercy-seat for pardon, but of believers through every successive stage of their Christian career. As long as we are the subjects of sin, we ought also to be the subjects of contrition. We may, through sovereign grace, have been justified by faith, and have been brought into a state of peace with God; but this does not render inappropriate to our state the most humbling sense and confession of our sins, any more than it is inconsistent with the relationship of a child to humble himself before his father for defects in his obedience, which, though they do not set aside his sonship, are unworthy of it. "If we say we have no sin," says the apostle, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This language applies to believers, and not merely to unconverted sinners; and so does that which follows: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us

from all unrighteousness." The most perfect assurance of hope does not release us from the duty of abasing ourselves before God; and if an angel were sent to assure us that we are in a state of acceptance with heaven, we should still lie under obligation to cultivate a contrite and penitential frame of mind. Sin, and not punishment, is the ground of humiliation. To imagine that because we are freed from the penal consequences of sin, we are under no obligation to lie low in the dust, evinces the greatest ingratitude and the most unbecoming pride. With what unutterable disgust we should look upon the individual, who, because his life had been spared by royal clemency, when it might have been taken by national justice, acted after his pardon as if that very pardon had entitled him to forget his crime, and live as carelessly and as confidently as he would have done had he never sinned. A pardoned sinner, and no believer is anything more, should ever be an humble and self-abased creature in the sight of God.

The subject we are now upon shows us what cause there is for humiliation before God. This frame of mind should not be founded upon, or produced by, mere general views of our depraved nature, but conviction of the particular sins which we commit: as long as our confessions are confined to mere acknowledgments of a depraved nature, our convictions of sin are not likely to be very deep, nor our sorrow for it very pungent. Such confessions will usually sink into mere formal and sorrowless acknowledgments of transgression. It is the descending to details; it is the lively view and deep conviction of specific acts of transgression, or defects in virtue, that awaken and sharpen the conscience, and

bring the soul to feel that godly sorrow which worketh repentance. One distinctly ascertained defect or transgression, especially if it be much dwelt upon in its extent, influence, and aggravations, will do more to humble the soul, than hours spent in mere general confessions of a depraved nature.

There are many things, on the ground of which no self-abasement can be felt by the Christian who is walking in any degree of religious consistency. He cannot confess that which he really has not been guilty of; he cannot be humbled on account of any act of open immorality, for he has committed none. In reference to actual vice, he is to be thankful, not humble; he is to be humble, indeed, that he has a nature capable of it, if left of God; but he is to be thankful that he has not been permitted thus to disgrace himself. It is sometimes to be regretted that good people, in their public confessions of sin, are not more definite than they are, and that they do not express the particular sins for which they seek forgiveness of God. Without using language that seems applicable to adultery, robbery, and drunkenness, our defects in all Christian graces are so numerous and so great, that there is no degree of humiliation which is too deep for those defects and omissions, of which the holiest man is guilty before God. And we have no need to go beyond the subject of this treatise, to find how exceedingly sinful and vile we must all be in the sight of God. Let us only call to remembrance the truly sublime description which the apostle has given us of the divine nature, and to which, of necessity, we have so often referred, "God is love," infinite, pure, and operative love; let us only recollect

his wonderful patience, his diffusive kindness, his astonishing mercy even to his enemies; and then consider that it is our duty to be like him, to have a disposition which in pure, patient, and operative benevolence ought to resemble his; that this was once our nature, and will be again, if we reach the celestial state; and surely, in such a recollection, we shall find a convincing proof of our present exceeding sinfulness.

Let it not be replied that this is subjecting us to too severe a test. By what test can we try our hearts, but the law of God? What a proof is it of sin, when we find that the instances in which we have committed it are so numerous, that we want to get rid of the law by which it is proved and detected! O, what a fallen nature is ours, and how low has it sunk! We are not now examining it in its worst state, as it is seen among Pagans and savages, or even the best of the heathen; nor as it is seen in the worst parts of Christendom; nor as it appears in the best of the unrenewed portions of mankind: no; but as it is exhibited in the Church of Christ, in the enlightened and sanctified portions of the family of man.

Must we not, after this survey, exclaim with the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults!" Who can carry a proud heart in his bosom, or a lofty mien on his brow? Who can look with complacency upon his poor, starveling graces, and doat with fond and pharisaic eyes upon his own righteousness? Who is not stripped at once, in his own view, of all pride in his imperfect virtues, and presented to his own contemplation in the naked deformity of a poor, sinful, and imperfect creature, who

has no ground for pride, but most ample and abundant cause for the deepest humiliation? Let the men who value themselves so highly on the ground of their moral dignity, and who are regarded by others as almost sinless characters, and who feel as if they had little or no occasion for the exercises of a penitential frame of mind; who pity as fanaticism, or scorn as hypocrisy, those lowly confessions which Christians make at the footstool of the divine throne; let them come to this ordeal, and try themselves by this standard, that they may learn how ill-grounded is their pride, and how little occasion they have to boast of their virtue! Would they like that any human eye should be able to trace all the movements of their hearts, and see all the workings of envy, and suspicion, and wrath, and selfishness, which the eye of Deity so often sees there? Say not that these are only the infirmities of our nature, to which the wisest and the best of the human race are ever subject in this world of imperfection; because this is confessing how deeply depraved mankind is, even in its best state. Can envy, and pride, and selfishness, and suspicion, and revenge, be looked upon as mere peccadilloes, which call for neither humiliation nor grief? Are they not the germs of all the crimes which have deluged the earth with blood, filled it with misery, and caused the whole creation to groan together until now? Murders, treasons, wars, massacres, with all the lighter crimes of robberies, extortions, and oppressions, have all sprung from these passions.

What need, then, have we all of that great sacrifice which bears away the sin of the world, and of a perpetually recurring application, by faith and repentance, to

that blood which speaks better things than the blood of Abel, and which cleanses from all sin! What cause have we to repair nightly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy; and daily, that we may find grace to help in time of need! With the eye of faith upon the propitiatory offering that was presented to Divine justice by the Son of God upon the cross, let us continually approach the awful majesty of heaven and earth, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

CHAPTER XX.

IMPROVEMENT, BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Love may be enforced on the ground of consideration for our own peace and comfort. We are not to be indifferent to our own happiness; indeed we cannot be so: man can no more will his own misery, or be careless about his own comfort, than he can cease to exist. To seek for enjoyment is the first law of our existence, an inherent and inseparable propensity of our nature. In this respect, the angels, and the spirits of the just above, agree with men upon earth. There is no sin, therefore, in desiring to be happy; we could not do otherwise if we would. Ever since the entrance of sin, however, the heart is corrupted in its taste, so as to put evil for good; and men mistaking the nature of happiness, of course mistake the way to obtain it. But all their pursuits, however varying, and however unlawful, are the operations of this propensity of the human mind; they are all but so many efforts to obtain happiness. To this feeling of the human bosom, many of the most comprehensive beautiful and encouraging invitations of the Gospel of Christ are addressed; and it is at once the glory and the peculiarity of the Gospel, that it addresses itself first, not to our moral, but to our natural, wants. It meets us, not as craving after holiness,

for of this an unenlightened, unconverted sinner knows nothing; but as craving after happiness, a desire common to every human bosom: this is the meaning of that exquisite language with which the apostle almost closes the Word of God, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The same view appertains to the language of the Prophet, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." The thirst here mentioned is not, as has been frequently but erroneously stated, the strong desire of a convinced sinner after the blessings of the Gospel; but that of a miserable creature after happiness. The persons addressed by the Prophet are such as were spending their money for that which was not bread, and their labour for that which satisfied not; expressions which will not apply to those who are desiring Christ, and the blessings of his Gospel, but to those who are endeavouring to be happy without them: to all these the Lord Jesus is represented as saying, "Hearken diligently unto me. Come unto me: I will give you the sure mercies of David; then shall ye eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness. I am the way to happiness. Men shall be blessed in me." The blessing of the Gospel, by which men are made happy, is not only justification through the righteousness of Christ, but also sanctification by his Spirit. An unrenewed heart can no more be happy in any place or circumstances, than a diseased body can be rendered easy and comfortable by situation and external advantages. Until the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, be regenerated and brought to love God supremely, there can be no peace; as long as the heart

is under the dominion of predominant selfishness, and all those lusts and passions to which it gives rise, it must be miserable. In the absence of love, the human bosom must be the seat of uneasiness and distress. Happiness does not arise from possessions, so much as from dispositions; it is not what a man has, or where he dwells, but what he is. Whatever be the great source of felicity, the springs of it must be seated in our nature. There are certain tempers, the absence of which would render heaven a place of torment to us; and others, which would raise for us an Eden in the dreariest wilderness on earth.

Love is essential to the happiness of a moral agent. This was the original rectitude of our nature. Man was made for love; to love God supremely, and to love whatever is like God, or related to him. This disposition was not only his temper in Paradise, but it was the very paradise of his soul, in which he held the sweetest communion with God and universal being. This tuned his heart to harmony with his Maker and his fellow-creatures. Every movement of his heart was a movement of love, and all his desires so many aspirations of love; this constituted at once his honour and his happiness. Hence the implantation of this grace in his soul, is the bringing back man again to his original state, to his "divinely natural condition;" and, therefore, it is his restoration to true complacency and satisfaction. It is true that in the absence of this, many pretend to some kind of enjoyment, and have it too; for there are pleasures of sin, such as they are; but as to solid happiness, that which befits and satisfies a rational, moral, and immortal creature, it is with the greatest truth affirmed that the wicked are like the

troubled sea that cannot rest, but is continually casting up mire and dirt.

Let any one consider the passions which love expels from the bosom, or which it keeps in subjection where it does not eradicate them, and ask if that heart can be the seat of comfort, or the region of peace, where they predominate. As well may we expect quietude and comfort in a haunt of banditti, or in a den of wild beasts, or on a field of battle, as in a heart where anger, wrath, malice, envy, pride, and revenge, have taken up their abode. On the other hand, how calm, composed, and cheerful, is the heart where meekness is the presiding spirit; where love to God has introduced benevolence to man, and has subjugated the temper to the dominion of love! Let any one consult his own experience, and enquire if there be not an ineffable delight in the feelings of benevolent regard; whether such a state do not resemble one of those calm and glowing summer evenings, when nature seems to be quietly enjoying peace together. But how demon-like is the feeling when the turbulent passions gain the ascendancy; what agitation and what torment are the result!

Love is the disposition congenial to the Holy Ghost; and renders the heart the abode of his delight. "The irascible passions," says Mr. Hall, in his beautiful tract on the Work of the Spirit, "surround the soul with a sort of troubled atmosphere, than which nothing is more contrary to the calm and holy light in which the Spirit loves to dwell." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and grieve not the Spirit of God;" an expression which, as I have already considered, from its context, intimates that the Spirit of God is susceptible

of offence; and peculiarly so, from any neglect or violation of the law of love. Every thing connected with our spiritual well-being depends on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our hearts: when this divine guest retires from our souls, and withdraws his gracious influence, he gives utterance at the same time to the solemn denunciation, "Woe be unto you, if my soul depart from you." The heart of the believer assumes then the character and appearance of a temple forsaken by its deity; all is ruin and desolation; the sacrifice ceases, the altar is overthrown, the fire is extinguished. We have all much need to present with the utmost fervour the supplication of the Psalmist, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." No witness to our sonship, no consolation, no faith, no hope, no growth in grace, no joy and peace in believing, can then be enjoyed; instead of this, we shall be abandoned to worldly-mindedness, unbelief, despondency, gloomy apprehensions, and foreboding anticipations. The Spirit will retire from that heart which is destitute of love, and which is perpetually indulging in tempers of an opposite description. If, then, you would retain this divine visitant, this illustrious guest; if you would indeed continue to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; if you would have God abiding in you, cultivate the grace of charity: invite him to your souls for this very purpose: yield yourselves to his tender solicitations and gracious drawings: open your minds to his gentle illapses: and when at any time you feel an unusual relenting of mind, follow up the impression, and resign your whole selves to the benign power, of which you are at that time the happy subjects.

Love will promote your own peace and comfort, by conciliating the good-will and kindness of others. In all the commerce of life, we are generally paid back by the same kind of conduct which we maintain towards others. Ill-will, pride, envy, and selfishness, are sure to excite and to array against us the bad passions of mankind. Under such circumstances, many will take delight in annoying us; all our unkindness will come back upon us in innumerable acts of retaliation. But love conciliates esteem. "The meek shall inherit the earth:" their quiet, and inoffensive, and benevolent spirit subdues, by a mild but irresistible power, the most violent and injurious tempers. It has often led the lion, the tiger, and the serpent, by its soft and silken cord; it has charmed to tameness not only the fierceness of wild beasts, but the frantic rage of the furies. It was thus that Jacob subdued the rage of Esau, who was marching against him with purposes of revenge; so that, instead of executing his wrath, "he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." It was thus that David softened the heart of Saul, and disarmed his malignity of its murderous intention. "Is this the voice of my son David?" said the royal persecutor; and he lifted up his voice and wept, saying to David, "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." "Who is he that will harm you," said the apostle, "if you are followers of that which is good?" Who can be the enemy of charity? Who will subject himself to the odium and reproach of being unkind to love.

In all these ways, do we promote our own peace by the cultivation of this temper. And can we be indiffer-

ent to our own comfort? Is it a matter of no moment to us, whether our bosom be the seat of quietude or agitation? Oh no; it is not, it cannot be. But we have had our attention too much drawn off from ourselves. We have forgotten that it is said, "The good man shall be satisfied from himself." We have thought, or acted too much as if we thought, that the sources of peace were without us and beyond us. We are not yet cured of the disease of earthly-mindedness. We still labour under the mistake that happiness is something unconnected with moral disposition; that it is a matter foreign from ourselves, and arising from the adventitious circumstances of wealth, rank, and fame. It is time to take another course, to adopt another scheme, and try other means. Let us seek God's grace to open springs of pleasure in ourselves. Not that we are to seek in ourselves for joy and peace, when suffering under a consciousness of sin; not that, as sinners, we are to seek relief from the burden of guilt in our own virtues or graces; not that we are in any sense to look to our own works, as constituting our justifying righteousness; in all these views of our case, we must rejoice only in the Lord; but as those who are justified, and at peace with God, through Christ, we are to do the work of righteousness which is peace, and enjoy the effect of righteousness which is quietness and assurance for ever; we are to covet the rejoicing which Paul speaks of as arising from the "testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." There is the joy of justification, and the joy of sanctification; one, the delight of being restored to God's favour by the work

of Christ; and the other, the joy of being restored to God's image by the work of the Spirit. Many seem afraid of the joys of holiness, and count all delight, but that of faith, to be a mere effervescence of self-righteousness, which only intoxicates the soul with pride. Why, then, has our Lord pronounced his sevenfold beatitude on the graces of a renewed mind? Why has he thus so emphatically and solemnly connected happiness with holiness? The angels are happy, because they are holy; and the heavenly felicity is the perfection of sanctity. In proportion, therefore, as we give ourselves up to the influence of the government of love, we approach to the blessedness of the spirits of just men made perfect. He that lives in love shall drink of the water of his own cistern, and be satisfied; he shall, every morning, find this heavenly manna lying upon the surface of his soul, and be fed with it to eternal life; and finding himself united by faith to the truth, he shall find peace within, although in the world he should have tribulation.

True religion is not sullen stoicism, or gloomy melancholy; it is not an enthralling tyranny exercised over the noble and generous sentiments of love and delight, as those who are strangers to it imagine; but it is full of vigorous and masculine felicity, such as ennobles instead of degrading the soul; such as does not disspirit and sadden the mind afterwards, when the season of enjoyment is gone by, as do earthly and sensual pleasures, but elevates its views and purposes, and strengthens it for lofty enterprise, and heroic deeds, by giving it to drink of the river of life, clear as crystal, which flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and refreshing it with what, in a true and holy sense,

may be called the nectar of immortality. That religion which does not consist in mere airy notions, in cold and heartless orthodoxy, in pharisaic forms and ceremonies, but in faith working by love, love to God, to Christ, to the brethren, and to the world, does sometimes in its higher elevations lead the soul to a Mount of Transfiguration, where it glows amidst the splendour that falls on it from the excellent glory; or takes it to the top of Pisgah, where it sees the distant prospect of the promised land; thus placing it in sight of heaven, and on the confines of eternity.

2. Love prepares the soul for making greater attainment in all other parts of religion. It is produced by knowledge and faith; but, by a re-action, it increases the power of its cause. It is just that state of heart which is adapted to the growth of all the plants of religion, that without it are soon spoiled by the impure droppings of our own corrupt and selfish affections. How much will our growth in knowledge be aided by this state of soul! "If any man will do the will of God," said Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Disposition prepares for knowledge. When Zoroaster's scholars asked him what they should do to get winged souls, such as might soar aloft in the bright beams of truth, he bade them bathe in the waters of life; and upon being required to state what they were, replied, "The four cardinal virtues, which are the four rivers of Paradise." The reason why truth prevails no more in the world, is because there is so little love. Our views are contracted and dim, not because of the narrowness of the prospect, or the want of a sun to enlighten it; but because both the luminary and the

scene are veiled by the mists which our corruptions send up from our hearts to becloud our understandings. The holier we are, the clearer will the truth appear to our intellect, and the better able shall we be to bear the brightness of its glory; even as our Lord declares, that it is purity of heart which must prepare us to sustain the beatific vision. The pagan sages prescribed to their pupils a certain moral disposition, as essential to advancement in knowledge; and so does Christianity. Plato taught that he who, by universal love and holy affection, is raised above the dominion of selfishness, comes into the nearest union with God, and attains to the highest intellectual life; and this is the unction of the Holy One, mentioned by the apostle, whereby we know all things. Our souls are too clouded and too agitated by the bad feelings of our hearts, to make great attainments in holiness. The moral excellence of the truth is hidden from us; it passes before us in dark outline an awful and majestic form: we see its back parts, but we discover not the brightness and the beauty of its countenance, on account of our want of holy conformity to its nature, and of fitness for its fellowship. Let us, then, grow in love, that we may grow in knowledge. And with respect to faith, the more we are brought to feel the influence of the great scheme of redeeming love, in transforming us into its own image, and causing us to love others, as God for Christ's sake has loved us, the more firm will be our conviction of the divine origin of the plan which has thus wrought so marvellous a change upon us. He that believes has the witness in himself, in the revolution of feeling, of motive, and of aim, which has been produced in his soul. To him the experimental evidence

of the truth of the Gospel appears with a brightness which none of the rest possess. He is himself an evidence of the divine power which accompanies the truth. No subtle argumentation can reason him out of the consciousness of the change and deliverance from predominant selfishness to love which he has experienced. If all Christians acted fully up to their principles, and drank as deeply as they might do, and should do, of the spirit of charity, the impress of heaven would be so clearly enstamped upon the church, that the divinity of the Gospel could no longer remain a matter of question with any. Who can doubt the heavenly origin of that system which has raised him not only to a heavenly hope, but to a heavenly temper?

3. The credit and honour of religion require that we should seek after higher attainments in love. It is well known by all who possess any, the most superficial, acquaintance with the Word of God, that the end and design of the great scheme of revealed truth, a scheme which occupied the councils of heaven from eternity, and was accomplished by an incarnation of God himself, that the end for which the Son of God was crucified, a mystery which angels desire to look into, was not merely to bring a set of notions into the world, and to induce men to change one class of opinions and forms for another, still leaving the heart of man as impure and selfish as ever: on the contrary, it is known that God has come down to our nature, to raise us to his; that the whole plan of salvation terminates in the renewal and perfection of the human race in the principles of purity and benevolence. It has been declared, wherever Christianity has travelled, that the essence of religion is love. Hence expectations have been indulged in

reference to the benign and holy temper of the followers of the Lamb which were well founded, although they were highly raised. Men have said, "Let us see how those Christians conduct themselves." What disgust and disappointment have been, in many cases, and to a wide extent, the result! Has the Church of God yet answered to its own professions, or to the expectations of its spectators and enemies? Has religion derived from the conduct of its friends all the advantage, in the way of attestation and recommendation, which it should? Are they seen everywhere so meek, so just, so kind, so candid, so benevolent, so humble, as to excite admiration, and to extort the concession that the principles which could produce such conduct must be from heaven? On the contrary, have not multitudes who judge of Christianity, not as they should do, by itself, but by the conduct of its professors, received, from the offensive exhibitions of pride, and selfishness, and malice, which they are doomed sometimes to witness in the church, an unutterable disgust, an invincible prejudice against Christianity? Where is the spirit of charity which was exhibited in the great Author of Christianity, and which is enjoined in his precepts, and contained in his system? is a question a thousand times asked, by those who live in a Christian land, but who see little there of universal love. Creeds and catechisms, forms and ceremonies, devotional seasons and religious observances, will be thought of little worth, and will do little to ensure the esteem and to engage the imitation of mankind, in the absence of that disposition which all these things are adapted and intended to produce. The world's demand of the church is for love: "We have had," say they, "enough of opinions; let us now have actions: we have

had more than enough of articles of faith; let us now see more of the fruits of love." And how shall we meet that demand? Not by exhibiting less of truth, but more of love: not by giving up our creeds, or our forms, but by carrying them out into all the beautiful effects of beneficence and purity.

Christians, the character of religion is intrusted to our keeping, and we are continually defaming it, or raising its reputation; and are either betraying it into the hands of its enemies, or conciliating their esteem towards it. It is high time for us to be more aware of our responsibility: high time for us to consider that we are perpetually employed in increasing or diminishing the ignominy of the cross. The good conduct of professors is a converting ordinance, and an edifying one too. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify God, your heavenly Father." "Shine as lights of the world, holding forth the word of life." How? Not by attachment to doctrine merely: no; the light of truth will do nothing without the light of love. A fiery zeal for truth, unaccompanied by love, is the meteor that misleads, or the lightning that kills, or the volcanic irruption that overwhelms and consumes: all of which men are afraid of, and avoid: but a zeal for the truth, which is accompanied by benevolence, and produces it, is like the orb of day, men rejoice in its light, and hail the brightness of its rising.

O that my feeble voice could be heard, and my counsel followed, when I call the followers of Christ to a serious consideration of the necessity, for the credit of religion, of their being like their great Saviour and Leader! O that my words could have weight, when I

entreat them, as they regard the reputation of that Gospel, which is all their salvation and all their desire, to covet earnestly, and to pursue constantly, this "more excellent way!" O that I could prevail, when I beseech them, to study the genius of their religion in its facts, doctrines, injunctions, and examples, to see if it be not love! O that I could succeed in my wishes and my efforts, that they may no longer, by the indulgence of their malevolent passions, strengthen the bands of iniquity which bind men to their sins, and raise up an enmity to religion which shall aid and accelerate their damnation! O what a new era would commence in the history of the church, when finding what a cloud had been brought upon the truth as it is in Jesus, by the bigotry intolerance and enormous cruelties of corrupt and persecuting communities; by the spirit of party which has more or less infected all sects; by the rancour of controversy; by the passions of war; by the pride of pharisaism; by the schism of the brethren; by the envy, covetousness, and malice of professors; all true Christians should be baptised afresh unto repentance in the pure and peaceful waters of the sanctuary, confessing their sins of uncharitableness and ill-will: then might it be expected that, as in the case of the Divine Head, so in that of the mystical body, the Holy Ghost, in his dove-like form, would descend to "rest upon it," and by an unearthly glory, prove and display its heavenly origin.

4. By this means, we shall be enabled in a very eminent degree, to glorify God. For a man to live for himself, as the ultimate end of his existence, is no less mean, and low, and little, than it is wicked. Selfishness

of this kind not only pollutes the soul, but degrades it: it limits its desires within a very narrow compass; imprisons its hopes in a poor contemptible hovel; and drags down its ambition, from the glory of the infinite and eternal God, to the paltry and insignificant interest of a finite and unworthy creature. The heart of the real Christian is too large to be contained within such boundaries; understanding that God is the author of his existence, he makes him the end of it; that, as he came from him, he may be continually returning to him. Every thing is to be estimated in point of dignity and elevation, by the end it seeks. Its aims give it whatever value it possesses, and fashion it into their own likeness. Nothing can make that great which only aims at what is little; while a sublime nature is imparted to that which seeks a sublime end. Now, a higher end, no creature in any world, however exalted, can propose to itself, than the glory of God; and a lower one, the humblest believer in all God's family on earth, should never seek. This, indeed, ennobles the the soul, and elevates it to the capacity of enjoying infinite goodness, which is God himself; it makes it dilate itself in the boundless sphere of the Divine Being and blessedness, and makes it partake the fulness of him that filleth all in all. "We glorify God, by entertaining the impression of his glory upon us, and not by communicating any kind of glory to him. Then does a good man become the tabernacle of God, wherein the Divine Shechinah does rest, and which the Divine glory fills, when the frame of his mind and life is wholly according to that idea and pattern which he receives from the mount. We best glorify him, when we grow

most like him; and we then act most for his glory, when a true spirit of sanctity, justice, and meekness, runs through all our actions; when we so live as becomes those that converse with the great mind and wisdom of the whole world, with that Almighty Spirit that made, supports, and governs all things, with that Being from whence all good flows, and in whom there is no spot, stain or shadow of evil; and so, being captivated and overcome by the sense of Divine loveliness and goodness, we endeavour to be like him, and to conform ourselves, as much as may be, to him. As God's seeking his own glory in respect of us, is most properly the flowing forth of his goodness upon us; so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavouring a participation of his goodness, and an earnest, incessant pursuing after the Divine protection. When God becomes so great in our eyes, and all created things so little, that we reckon nothing as worthy of our aims and ambition, but a serious participation of the Divine nature, and the exercises of Divine virtues, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, and the like: when the soul, beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the Divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavours after the greatest resemblance of God, in justice, love, and goodness: when conversing with him by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness, and power of his goodness, we endeavour to assimilate ourselves to him: then we may be said to glorify him indeed."*

* "Select Discourses," by John Smith; a book, which for its combination of learning, genius, and piety, has scarcely its parallel in the

These noble sentiments should be engraven on our hearts, that they may be constantly reduced by us to practice. O, who that would have his nature exalted to the highest pitch of honour and happiness will not give all diligence to cultivate that disposition which is the brightest representation which our world contains of its Divine Creator? To exhibit a temper, which is the likeness of God; to manifest a virtue, in reference to which it may be said that it is an image of Deity, what an unspeakable dignity and delight! This is, in the highest sense of the term, to be raised into fellowship with God, a word that signifies not only an act of intercourse, but a state of communion; a communion of ends and aims, a kind of partnership in purpose and pursuit. God is ever seeking his own glory, as his ultimate aim in all his works: his perfection prevents him from seeking a lower end, and a higher he cannot seek: to manifest himself is his supreme purpose; and we can easily imagine that the manifestation of love is the end to which all the other displays of his attributes are made subservient. Have we any hallowed ambition in our nature, here is

English language. When shall we have some friend of the age and of posterity, who will give us a reprint of some of those valuable works, which, not because of their want of worth, but on account of their small bulk, are passing rapidly to oblivion? How much of every thing that should be dear to piety and learning might be compressed in about eight volumes of rare and invaluable treatises, which are known only to book-worms; who, like the prototype which gives them their designation, are holding their daily meal in solitude, and like it, will render the world no richer for their treasure! But, perhaps, such an undertaking would not find encouragement; then, alas, for the age in which we live! I cannot, however, think so ill of the present race of ministers, as to believe that they would take no interest in the many beautiful, though little known, treatises, of Puritans, Nonconformists, and Episcopalians, which are still in existence, but will soon be devoured by worms. [1828.]

scope for its gratification; here is an object towards which it may put forth all its energies, to hold communion with God in the manifestation of his glory; and can angels do more, except in doing this more perfectly? Christians! see your high vocation: you are set apart not only by God, but for him: constituted a people to show forth his praise: appointed not only to receive his grace, but to reflect his beauty. Your highest glory is to manifest His. His image is the richest ornament of your moral nature; and to show it to the world your great business upon earth. The meanest Christian shows forth more of God than the heavens which declare his glory, and the firmament which shows his handy-work: such a man is a brighter object in the universe, and teaches more of its infinite Author, than the sun in his mid-day splendour, or the moon in her beauty, attended by her starry train, that glitter upon the vault of night. But to rise to this eminence, we must excel in love; we must put forth all its excellences, and put them forth in all their vigour, and fulness, and harmony, each in its time, its place and its occasion; for then we shall be like God: and to be like him is, in the highest sense, to glorify him; and to glorify him, by being made partakers of the divine nature, is to receive, so far as a creature can receive it, a kind of apotheosis, and to live up to the very height of our being, our honour, and our bliss.

5. Another motive, and it is the last I shall advance, for the cultivation of love, is, that it is the state of mind which carries the soul on to its ultimate perfection in the celestial state, meetens it for that state, and gives it a foretaste of its felicity.

It has been observed by the learned Cudworth, who appears to have borrowed the idea from Plutarch, that Divine Wisdom hath so ordered the frame of the whole universe, that every thing should have its own appropriate receptacle, to which it should be drawn by all the mighty force of an irresistible affinity: and as all heavenly bodies press towards the common centre of gravity, so is all sin, by a kind of strong sympathy, and magnetic influence, drawn towards hell; while on the other hand, all holiness is continually drawn upwards to heaven, to embosom itself in glory. Hell is nothing else but that orb in which all evil moves; and heaven is the opposite hemisphere of light, where holiness, which is perfect love, eternally revolves. Remove sin and disobedience out of hell, it will immediately lose its darkness, and shine out in all the serenity and beauty of heaven: remove love from heaven, and its sun will set amidst the darkness and the storms of everlasting night. Heaven is not merely a thing to come; it is in one sense a present possession; for "he that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life." It is rather a state than a place; a state within us, rather than a thing without us; it is the likeness, and the enjoyment, and the service, of God; that which every true Christian carries in his bosom now, and into which he will fully enter hereafter, when he shall be made perfect in love. To this state, all true religion is ever tending: the spirit of love is the motion and progress of the soul towards its eternal rest in the presence of God. No man can be prepared for the celestial felicity while his heart is destitute of this; and whosoever has most of it, knows most of the unseen and ineffable joys of the righteous. He lives in the

vestibule of the heavenly temple; and is ready, whenever its doors shall be opened, to enter into the dwelling-place of God. The image of God is upon him, and the likeness of Deity is always attended with something of the happiness of the Deity. O, the bliss of that state, where the faculties of the mind, inconceivably expanded, shall let in the full streams of the Divine beneficence, and open themselves to the uttermost to comprehend the breadth and length, the depth and height, of that love which passeth knowledge: where Divine goodness will so act directly upon the soul, as to raise it to a state of holy enjoyment, surpassing all our present imaginations!

What a motive to go on in the pursuit of charity! Who does not wish to become better acquainted with his own eternal state? Who does not wish to have a more correct knowledge of that condition in which he is to remain for ever? To attain to this, we cannot turn aside the veil which conceals the holy of holies from our view: we cannot look upon the throne of God: we cannot be rapt, like Paul, into the third heaven: no, but we may, like John, see the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, and feel it taking possession of our hearts in the spirit of love. Rarely, indeed, do Christians attain, in the present state, in this unquiet world, to that calm repose of mind, that serene enjoyment, attendant upon the subjugation of the passions to the gentle dominion of benevolence, which conveys to them any very high notion of the supreme felicity connected with the consummation of such a temper. Happy seasons do occur; but, alas, how seldom! when they are so far released from the influence of every selfish

and angry affection; when they so far feel the transforming influence of that Divine beneficence which they contemplate, as to be conscious of the perfect felicity which must arise from their being filled with all the fulness of love. Let us seek more and more after those anticipations of our eternal state: we have not already attained, neither are we already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, let us reach onward, that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended in Christ Jesus. Heaven is not only above us, before us, beyond us, but may be within us: we may all know more of it than we do: let us become more and more anxious to accumulate, not the perishing riches of silver and gold, but the imperishable wealth of a holy and heavenly temper: let us aspire to immortality beyond the grave, and to the spirit of it upon earth, ever remembering that a Christian is one who professes to be born from heaven and to be bound to it: one who has more of heaven than of earth in his disposition: one who already dwells in heaven by dwelling in God: one who is meetened for converse with the innumerable company of angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, with God the Judge of all, and with Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant: one who bears the impress of eternity, and is irradiated with some beams of the celestial glory: and how can he give meaning, or consistency, or truth, to professions so high and so holy, except it be by that love which is the fruit of regeneration, the effect of faith, the necessary operation of love to God; and which, being cherished in the soul by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, comprehends in its embraces the whole universe, and in the exercise of its

good-will towards those who come under its influence, "suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; covereth all things; believeth all things; endureth all things;" and of which it is sublimely said, that "Charity never faileth."

THE COURSE OF FAITH,

OR

THE PRACTICAL BELIEVER DELINEATED.

PREFACE.

The substance of the following little treatise was given to my congregation some few years since, in a course of week-day sermons. It occurred to me at the time that peradventure what had instructed my own flock might be of some small service to others; but for some reason or other the matter was laid aside. The intention then conceived is now fulfilled, though amidst innumerable occupations, and painful circumstances in my family circle.

My mind was led to this subject, and has been sometimes helped in passing through it, by a similar course of sermons, contained in the works of Dr. Manton, who was justly celebrated as an homiletical divine even among the Nonconformist ministers ejected from the Established Church in 1662. No one will dispute the title I have applied to him, who is informed that he published five bulky folio volumes of pulpit discourses; one of which contained a series of sermons on the hundred and nineteenth Psalm. One is ready to ask, Where did the writers of those days find readers of their ponderous tomes of theology? I answer, among the professors of spiritual religion, who had both more love for the subject, and more leisure to study it, than we

of this age, and who had scarcely any other books to read.

With a due sense of the extreme prolixity, scholasticism, bad taste, and verbosity, of most of the writers of that celebrated school, not to speak of their occasional mysticism, distorted evangelism, and spurious theopathy, I confess to a strong partiality for them. We have no occasion, I am convinced, to be ashamed of them as our ancestors. In surveying their works, we feel something as the descendants of noble families, when they bring out from their wardrobes and museums the rich dresses and antique furniture of their forefathers, and smile at many things that now appear grotesque, but are still valuable in themselves, and proofs of former wealth and grandeur. The sound, rich theology of the first Nonconformists, when modified by the aids of modern exegesis, their deep devotion, their extensive knowledge of the great text book of all preachers, their constant aim to improve the heart, to guide the conscience, and to sanctify the life; in short, their thorough understanding of what is the true object of the Christian preacher, and their undiverted endeavour to accomplish it, render their works worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance: and when read and studied with all the corrective advantages of modern criticism, cannot fail to benefit those who will hold converse with them. Who in a right frame of mind can read without profit Owen, notwithstanding his antiquated style, his obscure scholasticism, and extreme wordiness; or the fervent Baxter; or the sublime Howe; or, passing from the Nonconformists to Episcopal writers, the copious Barrow, the meditative Hall, and above the rest, the sweet and unctuous Leighton, whose every page is redolent with

the odour of that Name which is above every name? No; we cannot spare the works of these men. Nor ought they to be retained upon our shelves for show, but not for use, like pieces of old armour on the walls of a museum, which have had their use, and are only retained as memorials of the past. If the light and accuracy of modern criticism and philosophy shall do nothing more than rub off the rust that time has deposited upon these sacred weapons, and adapt them more perfectly to use in modern welfare, it will perform a valuable service; but to abandon them altogether for other instruments, of entirely new construction, and even of new material, will be to exchange the theology of the Bible for a dubious philosophy, and to throw away "the armour of God," for a humanly invented panoply. Men that studied their Bibles, either by the light of the martyr's taper, or amidst the gloom of a dungeon, might be supposed, if the secret of the Lord be with them that fear him, to have known much of the mind of the Spirit.

The following treatise is an humble effort to follow, with unequal steps I admit, the example of these great men in the selection of their topics, and their mode of treating them. Between my book and Manton's there is as much difference in value as there is in bulk. Yet some may read mine who would never see his.

The design of this work is to aid the Christian in the practice of theology, rather than the divine in the study of it. I write for the disciple, not for the teacher. I aspire not to lead the student through the intricate labyrinths of controversy or into the depths of Biblical knowledge. To awaken the sinner, guide the enquirer, and aid the believer in the path of life, is

the highest object which my literary ambition has ever led me to seek, or could hope to obtain.

I have selected as the subject of this work, what none will deny is the great principle of the spiritual life, of the Christian character, and of holy conduct. There is such a thing as the spiritual life. Without it, or apart from it, religion is nothing, but however correct in outward form and expression, is a mere picture or statue, beautiful it may be, but dead. Faith is the expression of this life, or rather it is the principle of life itself developed in expressions. The spiritual life is subject of course to all the variations which mark the course of physical vitality; and hence the reality of what is called experimental religion or religious experience. There is perhaps no subject less understood or more abused than this. Man is a being possessed of the various faculties of intellect, will, passions, and conscience. Religion is designed to influence all these, for it takes the whole soul under its inspiration and guidance. It gives light to the intellect, determination to the will, emotion to the heart, tenderness to the conscience, and purity to the imagination; and brings out the effects of these various operations of the soul in all the beauties of a holy life. It descends into the soul, developing all its powers as the solar ray falls upon the prism, giving all the colours distinctly, and in due order and proportion. But men are apt to represent religion as consisting exclusively, or too predominantly, in the exercise of one faculty of the soul.

There have been, so to speak, different schools, distinguished by the predominance they have given in their representations of religion to one or other operation

of the soul. Some, like Sandeman, or Walker of Dublin, have resolved it into the intellect, and made true personal piety to consist of correct knowledge, almost to the exclusion of the affections; and have presented religion like an icicle, clear, but cold. Others, like Mr. Finney, have made it to consist almost exclusively of the determination of the will: this is to make it like a sceptre of iron, stern, inflexible, and powerful; but still hard, cold, and unfeeling. Others, like Madame Guion, Thomas a Kempis, and perhaps some of the modern Methodists, have given too great a prominence in experimental religion to the emotions: this is to exhibit religion as the morbid excitement and varying moods produced by stimulants, rather than the sober feelings and steady continuous action of health. Others again, such as Papists, Puseyites, and many of a better school, resolve nearly the whole of experimental religion into the imagination, and make it consist of the soul's intercourse, through this faculty, aided by the senses, with persons, places, and events of historic interest: this is to make it a kind of poetry, delighting the fancy with pathetic and beautiful mental pictures, pleasing associations, and brilliant images, while the intellect may be uninformed, the will unsubdued, and the conscience unenlightened. And it is very clear to observant minds, that in the present day writings are put forth by the evangelical school of divinity, representing experimental religion as partaking far too much of the soft, the pensive, the plaintive, and the sentimental, to constitute a robust and healthful piety, and these are more seductive on account of their seeming deep-toned spirituality. There is unquestionably considerable mental luxury in the hours of medita-

tive stillness and tender emotion, enjoyed during the perusal of such works, in which all that is spiritually pathetic in the facts of religion appeals to all that is susceptible in our nature, and the sweetest cordials are administered by the gentlest hand in the most tasteful cup. Such reading no doubt tends to foster the æsthetical part of religion. Yet it is a question whether works of this kind do not substitute for healthy personal religion, a vague emotional mysticism, a dreamy impression of religious feeling and poetic sentiment; whether they do not enervate the soul and render it less strong to mortify corruption, less disposed to cherish and exercise a self-denying and warm-hearted philanthropy, and more inclined to indulge the tastes of the religious recluse, than of the evangelist and the reformer of this dark, wicked, and wretched world. There is also another series of devotional and theological works, once very popular and widely circulated, but now forgotten, or nearly so, amidst the multitude of modern ones that have superseded them in public favour, to which I would for a moment allude, especially as bearing a resemblance in name to this treatise, I mean Romaine's "Life," "Walk," and "Triumph of Faith." Of these works it may be said, they are each the reproduction of the other, and all three are books of one idea, but that one how great and glorious, "Christ is all:" or put in another form, "The Lord our righteousness." With what delight the intelligent and devout believer, whose creed and whose heart are replete with Christology, may and must read these works, I need not say; but he must be an intelligent and devout believer to do so. He must be like their author, so entirely under the holy spell and fascination of the cross of Christ, as to

be able to look at nothing else. This was the case with Romaine: he so constantly walked and basked in the noontide glory of the Sun of Righteousness, that he had eyes for no other object. He was so engrossed with the great orb of gospel light, that he saw not even the wide and glowing landscape of beauty which that Sun revealed and illuminated. His faith was only or chiefly faith in Christ for justification. He shut up his readers to faith, and shut up that faith to Christ. It was a noble seclusion I admit, and yet it may be doubted whether it was a scriptural one. Christ is the centre of the Christian scheme, but it has also a circumference; and a true faith, while it begins at the centre, does not stop there, but radiates through all the intermediate spaces to the outer circle. Romaine's works, spiritual evangelical and experimental as they are, must be considered by every judicious mind as defective: they do not reflect the New Testament as a whole: there is in them, if not too much of Paul, too little of James; if not too much of the epistle to the Galatians, too little of the Sermon upon the Mount. Or to give another illustration, he dwelt almost exclusively on the justifying faith of the epistle to the Romans, without taking up either the justifying works of the epistle of James, or the general faith of the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. What was the consequence? Just what might have been expected: he prepared the way for theoretic Antinomianism, and many of his hearers when he died became the admirers and followers of that notorious personification of spiritual pride, presumption, and arrogance, William Huntington. For what is Antinomianism? The gospel abstracted from the law and resting upon a basis of sovereign mercy, instead of being

founded upon the principles of moral government; a scheme intended to subvert the law, while mercy is exercised towards its offenders. A true faith must be exercised as much towards all the duties of the law as towards all the blessings of the gospel.

It has been my object in the present volume to combine, as far as I could, the theoretical, practical, and experimental, in the representation of personal religion. In true godliness, the great truths of the gospel must be received in the exercise of intelligent faith: felt in their influence upon the affections, and carried out in practical and visible operation in the life. I cannot conceive of a true religion which does not affect the whole man; nor can I conceive of a true revelation which is not adapted to produce such a religion. It is the glory of Christianity that it does this. It addresses itself to all our faculties; it meets us in all our changeful circumstances; and is adapted to all conditions of our existence. If this be so, then a true faith must be that which, as a principle of action, is as extensive as the details of the Bible, and as the varieties of our situation and experience. There is no exercise of true religion with which faith is not in some way connected. No religious duty can be performed, whether relating to God the Father or Christ; to Providence or grace; to God or to man; to justification, sanctification, or consolation; to prosperity or adversity; to life, death, or eternity; which does not involve the exercise of faith. In the Christian life, it is the vital blood which, gushing from the renewed heart, flows through the whole frame of godliness, carrying warmth, health, and strength to its minutest parts, and to its extremities. Where this comes not, there is coldness and death. This supplies the pulse of the soul,

which indicates, as it beats feebly or vigorously, the state of the soul's health, and its degree of vigour and vitality.

It is therefore quite apparent that I have not too much widened the sphere of faith in giving it the varied application set forth in this volume. Too many, like Romaine, have opened for it only one channel to flow in, and that is justification. If too much prominence has not been given to doctrinal instruction, too little has been devoted to that which is practical. It is not knowledge, so much as love, which constitutes the Christian, the love which is the working of faith. Few can make high attainments in knowledge, but all may grow illimitably in the exercise of the holy, submissive, and kindly feelings. There is nothing now so much needed by and for Christianity, as an earnest exemplification of Christ's own teaching in his Sermon upon the Mount, founded on the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith. This exhibited by the church in the sight of all the world, would establish the law by faith; would preach louder than a thousand voices; would be more eloquent than ten thousand volumes; would carry to the minds of many a deeper conviction than the most conclusive logic; and do more to recommend the system of orthodox doctrine than the most powerful and attractive rhetoric. Let those who would see the error of many false systems of religion, and the nature of the true one, ponder deeply the apostle's saying, "In Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

J. A. J.

CHAPTER I.

FAITH IN GENERAL.

It must be obvious to all persons who reflect, that there are three perfectly distinct yet harmonious guides of human conduct, the senses, reason, and faith. The first direct us in regard to those objects which appeal to our bodily organs. The second is our rule in all matters connected with our varied occupations, tastes, pursuits, and duties in this life. The third is the ground of action in reference to religion and the life to come. These are different in their nature and objects, but they are not incongruous. Reason is not opposed to sense, for it is in part founded upon it; nor is faith antagonistic to reason, but altogether consonant with it. The life of sense is coincident with that of reason, and the life of reason with that of faith. Sense supplies materials for the work of reason, and reason guides and controls the exercise of sense. So reason assists faith, and faith sustains and elevates reason. Each is a step higher, and a step further than the other. Reason is an advance upon sense, the latter being the guide of brutes, the former the chief guide, in matters pertaining to this world, of men: and faith is an advance upon reason, being the guide of men in the things of immortality. Of sense and reason it may to a considerable extent be

said, they are of the earth, earthy; while of faith it may be affirmed it is of heaven, and therefore heavenly. The man is above the beast by reason: and the Christian is above the man by faith.

Faith, then, is our great principle and guide in matters of religion, and must of necessity be so, seeing religion has to do with matters of which we can know nothing but by revelation.

Faith stands out in the Word of God with a prominence and boldness of relief that must attract every eye. We could as soon look up to the cloudless heavens at noon-day and not see the sun, as open the page of the New Testament and not meet with this ubiquitous term. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him." "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "By faith we stand." "We walk by faith." "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." "We are justified by faith," "purifying our hearts by faith," "overcoming the world by faith." It were to quote a large part of the New Testament to cite all the passages in which this word occurs. It is, so far as the duty and privilege of man are concerned, the great central sun around which all our other duties and privileges revolve; which keeps them in their proper station, and imparts to them their radiance, life, and

vigour. We know nothing of the dispensation under which we are placed, and are altogether ignorant of the genius of Christianity, if we are not intimately acquainted with the nature, the province, and the importance of this grace. We shall stumble at every step, and can neither properly perform our duties, nor adequately enjoy our privileges, if we are ignorant of it. In all systems, whether theoretical or practical, there is generally some one principle which is the key to open all the rest. It is so here, and faith is the key of Christianity. If ignorant of this, we shall blend in confusion the systems of the law and the gospel, knowing neither how they differ nor how they are to be harmonised. Surely, then, it well becomes us at all times, and especially in times like these, when the principle of faith is attacked, not only by Popery, which is its direct, and we might almost say avowed antagonist, but by a formalism, which though it refuses to be called by the name of Popery, is in fact little else than its very soul.

It is of immense importance to a right knowledge of genuine Christianity and its counterfeits, to look steadily at the one very simple and obvious fact just stated; the prominence given on the page of Scripture to the word "faith:" and it is of no less consequence for detecting, on a broad scale, the errors of many systems of false doctrine, to observe how small a place this word occupies in them, and how it is shuffled out by their authors. This glorious term is so characteristic of our holy religion, as we find it in its own records, that, by a figure of speech, the act of believing is put for the object of belief; and both in Scripture language and in ordinary discourse, the whole system of Christi-

anity is called "The faith." "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Let us, then, very closely observe our situation. We walk by faith. The objects of our religious contemplation are all matters of mere testimony; we receive them upon authority. They are things unseen. Though realities, they are invisible. In following them, we abandon the guidance of our senses, and push into regions where even our reason also, though it accompany us, cannot precede us. Every step is, so far as sense is concerned, amidst thick darkness and awful silence. Our usual guides have left us; and we adventure forward with only the lamp of revelation in our hand. Neither God, nor Christ, nor heaven, nor hell, which are the great objects of faith, is seen or heard. We take all upon trust. In some respects Christianity is more entirely a life and walk of faith than Judaism, which to a considerable extent was a religion of sense. True it is, the Jew was required in the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical law to recognise the types and shadows of greater and better blessings to come, and this was itself an act of faith. And there were also the promises of the Messiah delivered out from age to age by the prophets; and the truth of these could be received, and the reflections which they excited could be carried out, only by an act of belief. Nor had the pious Israelite any other way of coming at the knowledge of a future state of happiness beyond the grave than we possess. So that there was ample room even then for faith. He had the Word of God containing the records of the past and the predictions of the future, which to him could become realities only by true belief: and

through all the varying circumstances of his individual and national history he was called upon to exercise confidence in God. Still to him there was much that was palpable and visible ever appealing to his senses; and therefore to a considerable extent he walked by sight. Thus before him was at one time the tabernacle of witness, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night: there stood the temple with all its visible rites and ceremonies, its priests and sacrifices, its altar and heaven-kindled fire, its ark of the covenant, its cherubim of glory, and its awful shechinah. Signs from heaven were perpetually present to his senses, and he could speak of what he had seen and heard. These things were the helps of the church's piety while yet it was in the infancy and feebleness of its existence, and when its confidence needed such props. It was a mixed condition of faith and sight which was never intended to be perpetual, but to be withdrawn when the church, under the dispensation of Christ and of the Spirit, had arrived at adult age. Some faint traces of this are even now remaining in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In them the outward symbols appeal to our senses, but the spiritual meaning to our minds. With these small exceptions, ours is a system of unmixed faith. We have the Word of God, and nothing else, to be our guide through this wilderness to our heavenly Canaan. Mr. Conder's beautiful hymn, in which he contrasts the Jewish and Christian dispensations, sets this forth in a very impressive manner.

"O God, who didst thy will unfold
In wondrous modes to saints of old,
By dream, by oracle, or seer,
Wilt Thou not still Thy people hear?

"What though no answering voice is heard;
Thine oracles, the written word,
Counsel and guidance still impart,
Responsive to the upright heart.

"What though no more by dreams is shown
That future things to God are known;
Enough the promises reveal:
Wisdom and love the rest conceal.

"Faith asks no signal from the skies,
To show that prayers accepted rise:
Our Priest is in the holy place,
And answers from the throne of grace.

"No need of prophets to enquire,
The sun is risen, the stars retire;
The Comforter is come, and sheds
His holy unction on our heads.

"Lord! with this grace our hearts inspire;
Answer our sacrifice by fire;
And by Thy mighty acts declare
Thou art the God who heareth prayer."

To walk by faith alone, then, is characteristic of a higher and more matured state of the church of God; as being the strongest exercise of confidence in God. Hence, perhaps, we may derive an argument against the personal and visible reign of Christ, as held by the pre-millenarians. The New Testament speaks of the Christian life as a life of faith, and that in a manner which would lead us to conclude that it was to remain such till the church militant becomes in heaven the church triumphant. But if Christ is to come and reign visibly, faith ceases, and the church in that case would walk by sight: and thus there would be a retrogression to Judaism.

Unbelief frets, murmurs, and cavils at this Divine arrangement, and asks whether it is not dealing hardly

with man, that his eternal destiny should turn on such a hinge, that his probation for immortality should be passed amidst such shades; that everlasting torment or misery should hang upon his belief or unbelief of matters from which his senses, his usual guides in other matters affecting his interests, are excluded; so that his weal or woe for everlasting ages should depend upon faith? And even those who do not go so far as to cavil at this arrangement, sometimes think it strange, and are ready to wish for the testimony of sense: "O, could we but see God and Christ, and heaven and hell, and thus know upon the evidence of sense, the truth and reality of these stupendous objects, instead of believing the revelation of them, would it not be helpful to our piety, and be a more solid basis of conviction?" Such is, perhaps, sometimes the aspiration of a feeble and ill-established, though pious mind.

In giving an answer to this cavil and this complaint, let us look from religion to the secular matters of this world, and see if there be not a perfect harmony between the arrangements of Providence with regard to things unseen and eternal, and the constitution of society with regard to the things seen and temporal. Are not the latter founded and directed, at least to a very considerable extent, upon the same principle as the former? What do we know of past history but by faith in human testimony; or how much but by the same medium do we know of any other country but our own? How much of all the information which we possess on every subject of human knowledge do we not derive from this source? Is not belief in testimony an instinctive principle of our nature, as evinced by the first buddings of reason in children, than whom, none more implicitly

confide in the assurances of others, and whose propensity to belief is a credulity which nothing but experience corrects? Is not the whole system of trade to a considerable extent founded upon credit; and what is credit but belief in human testimony? Is not a large part of our daily and ordinary intercourse with our fellow-creatures, and our usual course of action, regulated by faith? Where then is the anomaly, or where the hardship, of our being called to act in the higher matters of religion upon the self-same principle which guides us in our lower ones? It might, on the contrary, appear as if our practice in the lower department of action were only fitting and helping us to carry out the same principle in the higher one.

Besides, it is impossible it should be otherwise than it is. The objects of religion are in their very nature invisible, inaudible, and impalpable. It is their excellence and their glory not to belong to the objects of sense, nor to find a local habitation within their sphere. None can see God in his essence: and though we can conceive of the visibility of Christ, yet as his nature is now, our organ of vision might be too feeble to bear the blaze of his glory, or with all its exquisite contrivance, too rudely constructed to take in the stupendous vision. Heaven and hell are the regions of spirits: and can a fleshly eye see minds?

Let it be recollected that we are now in a state of probation and discipline for eternity, and what so suitable to such a condition, which necessarily involves something of self-denial, dependence, and submission to the will of God, as being placed in a state where simple trust in the Word of God is the testing quality of character? This was in part the nature of man's trial in

Paradise: there grew the fruit appealing to his senses, and inviting his touch and taste: but there, on the other hand, was the Word of God appealing to his faith, threatening him with death if he presumed to eat, accompanied, as to the tree of life, with the implied promise of immortality, if he abstained. He had nothing but the Word of God for either consequence, and his trial was one of faith. Can we conceive of anything more suitable as a test of character and conduct, than submission to the will, and trust in the Word of God our Creator, when, as in this case, both are accredited with sufficient evidence not only to warrant belief, but to render unbelief inexcusable?

If our probation is to be carried on on the present earth, (and in what other world can it be carried on?) then must it be in perfect harmony and keeping with all the arrangements and relations of an earthly state. The objects of religious and of secular pursuit must not interfere with each other: they must have no such separate departments or spheres, as to clash with each other. But how could this be secured in any other way, and upon any other scheme, than by making the one the objects of faith and the other the objects of sense, and by placing the former behind a vail, where they shall be sufficiently recognised by the eye of faith to have their proper influence upon all our moral conduct, without being so clearly seen by the eye of sense as to overpower by their grandeur and magnificence, our attention to the things of the present world.

Moreover, may I not here bring forward with advantage the testimony of Christ to prove how little advantage would be gained by any other system than that under which we are placed? In the parable of the rich man

and Lazarus, our Lord represents the former as entreating that Lazarus might be sent as a messenger from the dead to his brethren to persuade them to repent and escape the torments of hell. To this request Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them: if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." It is plain that our Lord must and could mean nothing else in this declaration than that they who will not take up religion upon a principle of faith, would not do it upon the testimony of sense. Let it be supposed that another system had been adopted, and that every man who is not satisfied with the present constitution of things had some palpable or visible manifestation of divine and eternal realities made to his senses, as far as this could be done; is it certain he would be more determined and influenced by it than by the testimony of faith? If this were granted only to him, he would then suspect it a mere dream, or the vision of a perturbed imagination, or an illusion of the senses; for how could he suppose that he should be so favoured as to be singled out from the multitude for such a special revelation. If on the other hand, the visible manifestation were perpetual and universal, which all men had in common, and had constantly before them, how soon would they grow awfully and carelessly familiar with the heavenly vision, and no more regard it than did the Israelites the pillar of cloud and fire, those constant and visible tokens of the Divine presence; or the dreadful scenes of Mount Sinai, when they made a calf and worshipped it, at the base of the cloud-capped and trembling mountain. Indeed the whole ancient history of the Jews is an actual demonstration of the fact, that a system of religious teaching

which appeals to the senses by visible objects, rather than to belief through the medium of testimony, has no great advantage in moral efficiency, and that to walk by sight is no more likely to ensure a due regard to the will of God, than walking by faith.

A reflecting and candid mind will therefore perceive that nothing can be more suitable either to man's nature or condition as a test of character, a rule of conduct, and a ground of obedience, than a revelation of the divine will addressed to his belief, and sufficiently accredited to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that it is an expression of the will of God.

This, then, is our condition, and it is an impressive and important one. God, in the exuberance of his mercy, has determined upon the salvation of our lost and ruined world. In the exercise of infallible and irresponsible sovereignty, and for reasons of which he gives no account to any one, he has passed by fallen angels, who are left to suffer the just punishment of their sins, and has resolved upon the redemption of fallen man, by the incarnation and vicarious death of his only begotten, well-beloved Son. All that stands connected with the contrivance, revelation, and execution of the stupendous scheme of mercy, from the beginning of time, is committed to imperishable record in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. They are the revelations of his work of mercy, and of what he requires of us in order to our availing ourselves of the provisions of his grace, and to our being saved with an eternal salvation. We walk, therefore, not by sight, but by faith in the book of God: we do not, cannot see the object of our pious regard, but they are there set forth upon the testimony of God him-

self; and our personal religion, our whole religion, in fact, consists in our believing that book, and acting according to it.

That mysterious, wonderful, imperishable, volume, written by holy men of old as they were moved and guided by the Holy Ghost, contains all we know, or can know with certainty, about God, Christ, immortality, heaven, or hell. There it stands apart and alone, testifying of these high matters to the children of men, and calling upon them so to believe its facts, doctrines, promises, precepts, and threatenings, as, under the power of this faith, and with the aid of the Divine Spirit which wrote the volume and gives the disposition cordially to receive it, to fashion their whole outer man and inner self by its contents.

But it is necessary that I now consider the nature of that principle in the exercise of which this divine book is received. It might have been supposed that so simple a subject as faith would have been sufficiently understood to need no explanation; and that a consentaneousness of opinion would have left no room for controversy: but it is not so. Even this has been beclouded and made the matter of disputation.

The sacred writers rarely enter into definitions: their language is generally used, with occasional variations, in the sense attached to it in ordinary discourse; and it is sufficiently accurate to be intelligible, without being elaborately precise. We meet however with one definition, if indeed it may be so called, of faith, and with but one. This occurs in the opening of the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I may just stop to

remark, that it is evident from the context, that the apostle is here defining faith, not in reference to the sinner's justification; but in its most comprehensive sense, as exercised in reference to the whole revealed will of God; as the principle by which the saint lives amidst all the ever-varying circumstances in which he is placed. That it is employed in this general and comprehensive sense in the passage before us, and not in its specific application to the great business of justification, is evident from the instances of its operation set forth by the apostle. It will however be found that this, its generic meaning, will apply also to all its specific varieties: and that the faith which justifies the sinner, and that which sanctifies the believer, is identical in its nature, though various in its relations, and somewhat diverse in its operations. The word rendered substance in the first clause of this definition occurs but five times in the New Testament, in three of which it is translated confidence, 2 Cor. ix, 4; xi, 17; Heb. iii, 14. And in the opinion of the most eminent critics, this is the meaning of the word in the apostle's definition. Some consider him as intending to convey the idea of such an exercise of mind towards "the things hoped for," as gives a kind of present existence to them: that he designed to say, faith makes us feel their reality, and to act under their influence, as if we saw them to be true. But does not confidence accomplish this? A man fully confident, actuated by a plenary persuasion of any thing future, does seem to have a sense of its present reality and existence. So that nothing appears to come nearer to the apostle's meaning than the word confidence. So understood, what then does he say? "Faith is the con-

fident expectation of the things which are hoped for." The true and essential nature of faith therefore, in all its applications and uses, whether general, as in this chapter, or special, in reference to Christ and the justification of the soul, is "confidence."

In the next clause he says, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." This word occurs but in one other place in the New Testament, and that is 2 Timothy iii, 16, where it is rendered "reproof," but without any necessity, as the meaning is, profitable for "conviction." The verb which answers to the noun is commonly translated, to convince, as in John viii, 9; Acts xviii, 28; 1 Cor. xiv, 24; and other places. "Conviction" therefore seems to be the idea the apostle intended to convey here. It must strike every reader that in strict propriety faith cannot of itself be the proof of the things believed. A man's faith in any testimony, however strong his belief may be, cannot be the evidence that the testimony is true. The word "evidence," then, must have been used here to mean that conviction which is produced by evidence, the cause being put for the effect. Inverting the order of the two expressions, and placing them in their logical sequence, and paraphrasing the language, the apostle says, "Faith is the conviction of the truth of those promises of unseen blessings which God has made, and a confident expectation of them on the ground of this conviction of their truth." What then does this amount to, but that faith is a real confidence in God? It is confidence in God, confidence that something reported to us in his Word is true, confidence in his veracity that he will perform what he has said, confidence in his power that he can perform it. This necessarily involves the idea of expectation, since

it is absolutely impossible to confide in his truthfulness and ability to perform something he has promised, without expecting it. Now if this be true faith, whether general or saving, it must ultimately relate to God himself personally. It has two objects, one proximate, which is the Word; the other remote, which is God himself: or to speak perhaps more correctly, God is the object of our confidence, and the Word is the medium of it.

Hence it appears evident also that faith must include in it something more than a mere intellectual assent. The report in which we believe is not one in which we have no interest; against which there can be no prejudice; and for which there can be no prepossession: but it is a testimony of good things for us, which must suppose, in the very act of believing them, some exercise of both the will and the heart. If a fellow-creature on whom I am dependent make me a promise, or utter a threat against me, (and God's testimony comes to us in this shape,) I shall voluntarily and fully place my confidence in him for the fulfilment of his word, if I believe him truthful and able to do as he has said: and that confidence in him personally, is my faith in him, and not merely my intellectual persuasion that he has spoken or written the promise. The proximate object of faith, I know and have already said, is the Scripture, which is God's testimony; but its ultimate object is God himself, who bears the testimony: so that, while by my understanding I believe in the truth of the testimony as God's, I at the same time with my will and heart confide in God himself for the fulfilment of the testimony. It is not merely the truth of the testimony that I believe, or in other words that the thing is spoken by

God, but the truth in the testimony, that he will do the very thing which is there promised. A man writes me a letter promising me some good thing; I know his hand-writing, and I believe it to be his autograph, so far, I believe with my understanding in the truth of the letter; but at the same time I know his wealth and veracity, that he can and will perform all he says: my confidence or faith in this is in him, and that confidence implies an exercise of my will and heart.

To exclude the will from faith is to deprive it of all moral character whatever: mere intellectual apprehension can have no moral quality, even though exercised upon a religious subject. Let faith be once reduced to a mere intellectual notion, a simple perception of evidence, a passive surrender of the understanding to the power of proof, and we at once destroy the responsibility of man for his belief. For who is answerable for that in which neither the will nor the heart has any share? And if there be no moral excellence in faith, and there can be none if it is a purely intellectual exercise, so neither can there be any exercise of the will, and of course no criminality in unbelief, this being the opposite of faith. I return again then to my view of faith, that it is in all cases a practical confidence in God.

It needs scarcely be remarked, that faith is confined to no one dispensation of grace; in this general view of it, it was called for as truly under the Jewish as under the Christian dispensation, and indeed its triumphs displayed in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, are all collected from the patriarchal ages and the times of the Levitical economy. Moreover Abraham is the father of the faithful, and so called, not because he was the first, but the most eminent believer. Yet it can

scarcely fail to strike an attentive reader of the Old Testament, how little is said about faith in that portion of Holy Scripture. Not that the thing itself is not there, but it is expressed by another term; the trust of the Old Testament is the faith of the New. Faith is confidence, and so is trust. This furnishes another proof, if another were wanting, that it is not a merely intellectual act.

Faith has relation to all the revealed will of God, as the different parts of it come successively under our attention. These are very various, some are in the form of promise, others of invitation, others of precept, and others again, of threatening. The law is as much a part of God's revealed will as the gospel, and must be as truly believed. Hell is as certainly threatened to the impenitent sinner as heaven is promised to the penitent believer: and therefore he who trembles and obeys, is as truly living in the exercise of faith, as he who hopes and rejoices. In some of the instances of faith mentioned in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, we see its operation in reference to a threatening, as in the cases of Noah and Rahab. It is true that even in these cases there was a promise to be hoped for, as well as a threatening to be dreaded. But both were believed. If this part of the object of faith is not comprehended among the confident expectations of things hoped for, it is among the full persuasions of things not seen. Every effort after holiness, every labour after self-mortification, every resistance of temptation, carried on under the persuasion that God has enjoined it, is founded on the belief of God's testimony, and implies an act of faith.

Such a state of mind cannot be referred to any lower

source than a divine and heavenly one: it is in every case the work of the Holy Spirit. Though this is clear from many parts of the Word of God, as well as deducible from the general principle that all spiritual good is from God, it is sometimes sustained by two passages of Scripture, which have no reference to it. The first is the expression of the apostle in the second chapter of the Ephesians and the eighth verse: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." By the gift, we are not to understand faith, but salvation; as is evident from the next words, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The subject of this ninth verse is evidently the same as that of the eighth, and refers to the gift spoken of, whether it be salvation or faith, that gift is not of yourselves. Now if the gift mean faith, the apostle is made to say faith is not of works, a truism which he could hardly be expected to utter. Moreover, every scholar knows that grammar forbids us to interpret the apostle's meaning to be, that our act of believing is the gift of God, since the pronoun "that," and the noun faith, are of different genders, the former being neuter, and the latter feminine.

The other passage misquoted, to prove the divine origin of faith, is this; "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Heb. xii, 2. The word "our" is in italics, to show that it is not in the original; and the word "author" signifies leader; viewed in connection with the context, the verse means that Jesus was our example. He, in his own life, began and ended the life of holy obedience to the will of God. He, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame." He who introduced

the Christian religion, is the great pattern in his own conduct of the religion which he taught. His life, as to his humanity, was a life of faith and holy obedience. He came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him. In doing and suffering, he acted as the Father's servant. Rich and glorious were the promises which were made him of ample rewards. These he fully and constantly believed. No unbelief ever turned him aside from the path of obedience or endurance. For the joy that was set before him, he endured even the ignominious cross, and thus became in his own example the leader and perfecter of that faith, which we, his followers, are required to imitate. Who can help exclaiming,

> "Such was thy truth, and such thy zeal,
> Such deference to thy Father's will,
> Such love and meekness, so divine,
> I would transcribe and make them mine.
>
> "Be thou my pattern, make me bear
> More of thy gracious image here:
> Then God, the Judge, shall own my name
> Amongst the followers of the Lamb."

Still there are not wanting proofs abundant and convincing, that faith is the work of the Spirit in the soul of man. There can be no true belief without regeneration. The connection of these two is set forth by the apostle when he says; "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." Hence the need of our constant prayer to God, in the language of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith;" and of the petition of the father, who applied for the

recovery of his child, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

It will be seen from what has been stated, that the objects of faith are, all the various matters which are contained in the whole Word of God, what God has revealed, and all that God has revealed, the smaller as well as the greater things of the Bible; since, if God has given his testimony, his truth is equally involved in one as in the other. Still, this state of mind is more conversant, of course, with those matters which are more important both to God and to us; his being, attributes, and works; his Providence; his law; the person and work of his Son; the personality, offices, and work of the Holy Spirit; the promise of life to the penitent believer, and the threatening of death to the impenitent sinner; the day of judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. These are the matters, about which the true belief of the Christian mind is more habitually and powerfully exercised, according to the circumstances in which we are placed, and the special truth which is at the time before the mind.

Two great principles must now be mentioned, and these are, first, that as faith is confidence in God for something he has said, where there is no testimony there can be no faith; where God has said nothing, nothing can be believed. Faith cannot take a step, but on the ground of revelation. In many cases there may be reasonable ground for hope, but in the absence of testimony there can be no persuasion. The conversion of particular persons in whom we feel a deep interest; the recovery of friends dangerously ill; the success of particular efforts for the spread of religion; the prosperity of our laudable and promising undertakings; cannot be

matter of faith in the full meaning of the term, because we have no testimony of God concerning them. Persons are sometimes said to have strong faith because they are very confident in these matters; while others who have not the same confidence are reproached as very weak in faith. In this case the wrong words are employed, for all that can be truly said of these two classes of persons is, that the one is more hopeful and sanguine than the other; and the other more timid and fearful. Nor will it do to say that the mind is so strongly impressed with the certainty of the thing desired, that it may be received itself as a testimony of God. Impressions of this kind are dangerous things to trust: if real, they would be revelations, and would still require something else to accredit them. Multitudes who have had, as they supposed, these impressions, and also the faith which rests upon them, have lived to see that the whole was delusion: and that they had substituted their wishes for the testimony of God. The life of a Christian is a life regulated by God's Word, understood and believed, and not a life guided by inward impressions.

The other great principle is, that as faith is a practical belief of God's testimony, where there is no practice there is no faith, and that there is just as much faith as there is practice, and no more. All the truths of revelation are in their own nature practical truths; that is, truths bringing the mind that receives them into a state of activity. They are not mere scientific principles which have accomplished their end, when upon the ground of their own evidence, they have been admitted as mere knowledge into the intellect. They are all, of themselves, and according to their own nature, adapted as well as intended to move the will and the affections, and to lead to

appropriate actions. And they are of a kind to stir the mind and heart very powerfully. If the testimony comes in the form of an invitation, it will infallibly, if believed, lead us to accept it; if of a promise, to rejoice in it; if of a precept, to obey it; and if of a threatening, to tremble at it: and consequently if these effects do not follow, there is no belief. This shows the delusion which many careless persons are living under, who when called upon to believe in Christ, reply that they do believe in him, while it is evident they are wanting in repentance, peace, and holiness. They are obviously in mistake, for if they really believed the testimony of God concerning his law, sin, pardon, heaven, and hell, they would certainly repent, and be happy and holy. Similar to this is the error of many enquirers after salvation, who when called upon to relieve their minds of the burden of guilt, and rejoice by faith, reply, that they do believe, but cannot rejoice: this again, in the nature of things, is impossible, (unless indeed there be a physical and morbid defect in their constitution,) for the real belief of glad tidings concerning ourselves must produce gladness. It is of immense importance to attend to this connection between real belief and the effects which follow it. No truth can be truly assented to which does not produce its own natural or appropriate effects, in the mind that cordially receives it. Let there be only the true and firm belief, and these effects must by a moral necessity follow it. Is it conceivable that a man can truly believe that the house in which he is, is on fire, and not get up and flee, unless he has lost the use of his limbs by a stroke of paralysis? Or can a man, under sentence of death, really believe that a pardon is granted him and not rejoice? This shows

where the great defect lies, with which the soul must begin, in all religious matters. The apostle says, "Add to your faith, virtue," and all the other graces. As this is weak, everthing else will be weak; and as this is strong, everything else will be strong. It is to our whole religion what the mainspring is to the watch, regulating all its movements, and keeping all in good order and action. This will lead us to see not merely that our personal religion is to be improved, sustained, and kept in vigorous action only by strengthening our faith; but equally how our faith itself is to be strengthened. This is a state of mind which admits of various degrees, from the most feeble, hesitating, and fluctuating expectation, up to the most full, entire, and confident persuasion. Hence the Scriptures speak of weak faith, strong faith, and the full assurance of faith. We can therefore easily perceive how this grace is to be strengthened; and that is, not by any direct and abstract determination of the will; not only by labour with ourselves, apart from the contemplation of appropriate objects; nor merely by prayer, though this of course is to be sincerely and fervently offered; but by attentively and devoutly considering the grounds of belief. How do we strengthen our confidence in a fellow-creature? Not merely by saying with ever such force of determination, "I will trust him." Our doubts and fears will never yield to such a resolution, but will be far too strong for our confidence, if at the same time we do not take into consideration his actual trustworthiness. He has, perhaps, promised to help us out of pecuniary difficulties which press heavily upon us. In this case, two things are requisite to enable us to confide in him, his veracity and his ability. And to

strengthen our confidence, we say to ourselves, "I know he is able to help me, for he is a man of great wealth; and at the same time he is a man of unimpeachable veracity. He is a most reliable man." In this way, we grow in faith. We read over and over his letter, and at each perusal feel our confidence strengthened. This is natural, and it is intelligible; and it is precisely thus our confidence in God is to be strengthened. We are to read over, and over, and over again, his blessed Word, his "exceeding great and precious promises," and with the wondrous words before us, we are to meditate upon the attributes of God, his love, his power, his veracity, his unchangeableness; and as we read, we are to say, "Yes, here is his Word: I cannot mistake; it is no vision of the imagination; no illusion of the senses; no mere deduction of my reason; no offspring of my wishes: it is written in terms too plain to be misunderstood, and he cannot be unfaithful: 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but he cannot alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.'

> 'His every word of grace is strong
> As that which built the skies;
> The voice that rolls the stars along
> Speaks all the promises.'"

This is plain, palpable, obvious. Our doubts are many, our fears are strong, our faith is feeble, just because we are not more conversant with our Bibles, and with our God. It is astonishing how a single text will sometimes invigorate and strengthen the confidence of the mind that contemplates it.

By this time you will perceive what a noble principle is that of which I am now treating. It is eminently rational: far above reason, but harmonious with it.

Yea, it is itself the highest reason, its loftiest exercise. It is sustained by all the evidence that accredits the object on which it is fixed, and that to a greater amount than was ever accumulated on any other subject. The believer can not only appeal to the stream of current traditions flowing along in the channel of authentic ecclesiastical history, from the very time of Christ and his apostles; he can not only speak of the uninterrupted belief of the church through eighteen centuries; he can not only call up the shades of fathers, martyrs, and reformers, to corroborate his own opinion; he can not only tell of nations, both learned and rude, which have received the same truths as support, and cheer, and sanctify, and save him; but he can go down deeper still for the foundations on which his faith rests, and can survey with admiration and delight the basis of evidence on which they, as well as himself, have rested their confidence. Instead of repudiating his reason by believing, he feels that he should be repudiating it if he did not believe. To him the man who rejects Christianity, notwithstanding the evidence by which it is sustained, is the most astounding instance of irrationality in the world; while he who believes the gospel, is the most striking instance of the purest reason.

Nor can I hesitate to pronounce it a noble principle. Noble it must be if it is rational, and rational it is in the highest degree. It has been the delight of infidels and philosophers to represent the principle of religious belief as a low and degrading superstition, as the slavery of the human intellect, and as a chain upon man's eagle understanding, preventing his adventurous flight into the regions of speculation. Mistaken men, how ignorant are they both of its nature and their own! How tho-

roughly deluded by their own pride and vain conceits! In addition to what has been said about the rationality of faith (which is not only sufficient to protect it from scorn and contempt, but to raise it to the highest honour, even as an exercise of the understanding), consider the truths with which it is conversant, and the objects on which it fixes its piercing, unblenching, and steady eye. Philosophy is conversant only with the lower truths, faith with the higher: philosophy has to do with matter and the rational mind, faith with the immortal soul: philosophy is sense ministering to reason, faith is reason ministering to religion: philosophy searches the works of creation, faith has to do with the Creator himself: philosophy has no necessary connection with moral influence, faith is the root of all virtue: philosophy yields no motive to submission, and opens no source of consolation amidst the ills of life, faith supplies the balm of consolation and opens the springs of comfort for every sufferer: philosophy is of the earth, earthy; faith relates to the Divine and heavenly: philosophy is wholly engaged about things seen and temporal; faith, soaring on angel-wing above the low and narrow horizon of time and sense, descries the vast future, and looks at things unseen and eternal. Is faith then a subject for philosophy to sneer at? Talk of her eagle-wing and eye; compared with faith, philosophy is but as the gnat whirling round the dim taper in a little dark room, to the bird of day, soaring in mid-heaven, to the sun in the zenith. Faith enters the region which to mere reason is a terra incognita, and explores subjects which never approach the horizon of unaided intellect. The existence, nature, and attributes, of the one supreme, eternal Self-existence, who is the Cause

of all things, himself uncaused; the creation of the material universe; the history of our species, its original and its fallen condition; the origin and entrance into our world of moral evil; the laws and nature of moral excellence, together with the nature and guilt of sin; the doctrine of an all-comprehending, wise, and minute Providence; the immortality of the soul; the scheme of man's salvation; the way in which sin is pardoned, by the mediation of Jesus Christ; the resurrection of the body to eternal life; the eternal glories of heaven, and the endless torments of the bottomless pit; these, these are the matters and objects of faith; these, the Alpine regions of thought, amidst which it dwells, and which it daily contemplates. It is in habitual communion with the first truth, and the chief good. It leaves the region of sense, and goes where sense cannot follow it, and where even reason cannot go alone, and can only follow with timorous, hesitating step. How does it ennoble all who possess it, raising them into fellowship, not only with prophets and apostles, martyrs and reformers, but with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ! Surely, surely, that is not a state of mind deserving the sneer of philosophic pride, or of literary contempt, which raises the Christian peasant, the converted savage, or the heaven-taught child, to an elevation which leaves the man of mere reason all but infinitely beneath him.

And then how peaceful and tranquil a state of mind is that of faith. Well might the apostle speak of "peace and joy in believing." Why, believing in any case, when the objects of it are gladsome, and the evidence of their reality is conclusive, is a pleasant state of mind. What then must the joy of faith be, where the matter believed is so momentous to us, as well as so magnificent

in itself; and where the evidence of it is so decisive. It is said that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Now it is in these paths that the believer always walks, amidst lovely flowers and beautiful scenery opening on every side. To have always in our hands a volume full of the most glorious doctrines, the most gracious invitations, the most precious promises, the most salutary counsels, the wisest maxims, and the most faithful warnings, and all addressed to us: never to open it but to meet some kind seasonable word addressing us; never to take a step without seeing some flower of mercy growing in our path, and hearing some note of love sounding in our ears: never to look at any object but it gilds even grief with a smile, as if the beams of a reconciled God, our Father in heaven, had fallen upon it, and were reflected from it, and all this is the blessed privilege of faith; is not this peace, tranquillity, happiness?

> "'Tis a broad land of wealth unknown,
> Where springs of life arise;
> Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,
> And hidden glory lies."

And in this land it is the believer dwells, to enrich himself with this wealth; to drink of these springs; to gather the fruit which grows from these seeds; and to bring out and appropriate this concealed glory.

1. How important is it rightly to understand the great first principle of the Divine life in the soul of man, set forth as the subject of this treatise! First principles, in all matters, must be well understood, or all that follows will be defective or erroneous. It is especially so in religion, which many do not see. Instead of an intelligent believing giving rise to a right doing, there is

a blind wrong doing from beginning to end; a mere mechanical, or at best imitative, doing of something, they scarcely know what, or why. Religion is a conformity of conduct to the written Word of God, and it is of necessity that we must first understand the meaning, and then believe the truth, of that Word. This is religion, a character formed, a line of conduct pursued, in full confidence of the truth of this document, as the rule of our actions. When the attention is a little roused to a consideration of this momentous concern, many have their thoughts almost entirely engaged with the question, "What must I do?" But is there not another and a previous question to be asked, "What must I believe?" Religion is equally unsound whether it is all creed or no creed. It begins in right believing and goes on to right doing: and right believing must, through the whole of the Christian life, be the guide of right doing. Faith is the root, out of which grows the whole tree of our godliness, its trunk, its branches, its leaves, and its fruit. It is this which, striking its fibres into the Word of God as its proper soil, draws up the moisture which nourishes it, having first come down from heaven. It is only as we understand this, that we can begin or continue in a course of true, practical and experimental religion.

2. If this be true, religion has, of course, much that is objective in its nature; by which I mean, that there is much external to a man's own mind with which it is conversant, and upon which it lives. If it be a process of faith, this must of necessity be the case, inasmuch as the objects of faith are something without ourselves. We must not be wholly, or primarily taken up with subjective religion; that is what we can find in our own

hearts as the subjects of it. The mind, of itself, is dark as to matters of religious truth, and we see nothing, and can see nothing in a true point of view, till we see it in the light of Divine truth. Hence the expression, "The entrance of thy word giveth light unto the simple." Hence also the frequent prayers of the apostle in his letters to the churches, that the spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given; and his exhortation to "let the word of Christ dwell in them in all wisdom;" and "as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby." It is a great mistake in many to be almost wholly taken up with subjective religion, to the neglect of that which is objective. Instead of reading and studying God's Word, to receive the truth in the exercise of an intelligent belief, and to gain in the right ideas they derive thence, right sources of feeling, rules of conduct, and principles of action, they are ever busy with their own thoughts, emotions, and affections, trying to work themselves up to terror, joy, or grief; always wandering in a region of imagination, either exalted to rapture, or depressed to despondency; and microscopically examining, without ceasing, the state of their own feelings, while all the while they have very little recourse to the Divine Word. Their whole religion is rather fancy than faith; a kind of dreamy state of sickly or sentimental devotion. All which is as rational as for a man to light his house with a dim taper while he keeps the shutters closed and excludes the light of the sun, and to content himself with seeing the furniture of his own room, instead of looking through his windows at a glorious landscape spreading out before and around him.

There is another mistake which a higher class of religious professors are in our day fast falling into, I mean the exercise and cultivation of the spiritual life, apart from the Word of God. We hear and read a great deal of man's inner life; of the necessity and duty of his going down into the depths of his own consciousness; of his walking by the light of his own intuitions; of his educing from his own nature principles of action; and calling forth susceptibilities to and sympathies with the true, the good, and the fair, which are hidden there, and only want to be quickened into action by self-reflection. If by all this be meant nothing more than that self-communion, self-examination, and self-exhortation, by the Word of God, which in that Word is every where enjoined, it is all very good, and cannot be too earnestly enjoined. But if, as is but too evident, it signifies a species of self-cultivation apart from the Word and the exercises of an objective faith, an inward life, carried on, if not begun, by reason without revelation, a spiritualism which has no necessary connection with the Scriptures, and can be maintained without them; it is a kind of religion of which the Bible knows nothing, and is an approach to the pietism of a bygone age, which made way for Rationalism in Germany, and will make way for it here too, if it extensively prevail. Let the notion once be prevalent that piety towards God is something apart from, or in addition to, an intelligent belief in the written Word; a subjective matter which may be carried on by a man's retiring into himself, and communing with his own consciousness, and finding there all he needs, if not for his pardon, yet for his spiritual life; and we shall be prepared to merge all religious truth, all doctrinal theology,

in the vortex of an unscriptural, unsanctified, and unsubstantial spiritualism; in other words, the inspired, infallible, and exclusive rule of religious faith, feeling, and action, will be supplanted by a mysticism, without rule, support, or object but itself.

The objective and the subjective, must ever go together in true religion. The objective, or the grand truths of revelation apprehended and believed, are of little use unless they produce the subjective: that is, repentance, faith, love, and holiness: while on the other hand, the subjective cannot be of a right kind unless it be produced by the objective. In other words, that is not right faith which does not lead to practice; and that is not right practice which does not spring from faith. We must be ever looking out of ourselves to the Bible, to believe and to ponder it; and we must ever have the Bible in us, in all its principles of holy feeling, volition, and action. As external objects viewed by the organ of vision, paint their own images on the retina of the eye, so the truths of revelation, when looked at by the eye of faith, delineate them on the retina of the soul: and as in the former case, there could be no knowledge without looking at the objects, so neither can there be in the latter.

CHAPTER II.

FAITH IN REFERENCE TO JUSTIFICATION.

How interesting and affecting would it be to gaze upon a man pardoned after a just conviction for treason, and condemnation to a traitor's death. What should we feel when we saw him walking abroad, in full possession of liberty, when he had been so recently loaded with fetters in a dungeon; enjoying the light of heaven, after having been shrouded in darkness, relieved only by the few straggling rays that came through the gratings of his cell; surveying the beauties of creation, in place of looking on the cold, damp walls of his prison; rejoicing in the consciousness of freedom and life, in lieu of brooding over the gallows and death; delighting in the society of his family and friends, in exchange for the sullen converse of fellow-criminals and turnkeys; feeling, in short, that he was again a citizen, with all his rights and privileges as a man and a member of the community, after having been stripped of them all. What a change of circumstances! What a delightful reverse! How many reflections would it excite! We should think of his crime and his misery in gaol, of the mercy of the sovereign in reprieving him, of his own felicity in being spared, of his gratitude to the bestower of his life,

of his obligations to perform the duties of a good citizen in future.

There, in that case, is the representation, yet but a faint one, of every Christian. He too was a sentenced, is a pardoned, criminal. He has sinned, has been condemned, has repented, has believed, and is pardoned. His forfeited life has been restored. The fountain of mercy has been opened to him; a reprieve has been bestowed; and from an enemy, an outcast, and a criminal, he has become a friend, a servant, a child, of God. What a transition, how wondrous in itself? How much more wondrous in the method of accomplishing it! That we now proceed to consider.

What is justification?

This is an unspeakably momentous question. The term itself suggests this; its ordinary import is deeply important. It implies an accusation, and expresses a clearance. Its importance is learnt also from the large space it occupies and fills on the page of Scripture. The most valuable of all Paul's epistles, I mean that to the Romans, and also the one to the Galatians, were written to unfold it. No one can understand the New Testament, or the gospel scheme of salvation, who does not comprehend it. Immense consequence then attaches to the question, What is the justification which is the subject of apostolic teaching?

It is not any change in our moral nature, (that is regeneration;) but a change of our relation to God. Nor is it our being made personally just, for it is admitted we are sinners, and we cannot therefore be personally righteous and unrighteous too. Nor is it any impression or persuasion on our own minds that we are justified. It is not uncommon for a certain

class of religionists to speak of their having been justified at such a time and place, when all they mean is, that then and there they obtained a sense of pardon.

Neither is it any thing which according to the Popish or Puseyite notion takes place in and by baptism. It is not effected at the font through the sacerdotal ministrations of the priest, when as we are told, the guilt of original sin is taken away by the sacramental grace conferred with the baptismal fluid. The New Testament conveys no such notion as this.

Justification, I say at once, is substantially the same as pardon. The two words convey the same, or nearly the same idea. The apostle appears to use them convertibly, where he says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin." "In these verses," says Dr Wardlaw, "the forgiveness of iniquity, the covering of transgression, the non-imputation of sin, are evidently considered as amounting to the same thing with the imputation of righteousness; and this also is the same as justifying the ungodly: for David is represented as describing under one set of phrases the blessedness which the apostle expresses by the others." Still, as the apostles in the language of the New Testament so generally employ the word justification rather than the word pardon, there must be some reason for this, which I think is to be found in the two following considera-

tions. First. The word justification, while it means pardon, is used to convey the idea of the method by which this pardon is bestowed; that is, pardon consistent with justice. So that the word embraces both the blessing and the way of its bestowal, according to the demands of the law. Secondly. It denotes a general and permanent state of pardon, and not merely a particular act. By justification we are brought into a new and permanent relation; a state of favour. Justification is our introduction into this abiding condition; so that though pardon may be needed, and may be granted to us in this state from day to day, justification cannot be said to be repeated day by day. By justification we pass from the state of an enemy into that of a child: in this view of it, it is equivalent with adoption, and in this condition we may and do receive the paternal forgiveness day by day, though not the judicial clearance. Justification is the act of the judge relieving us from the sentence of condemnation, and bringing us into a state of favour; while subsequent acts of pardon are the expressions of the father, in passing by our transgressions. Still I repeat, the two terms mean substantially the same thing; and justification is pardon. They are certainly never enumerated together as two distinct blessings. We never read of pardon and justification. I know it has been common with some of the old divines to represent them as distinct; to consider justification as given to us on the ground of Christ's active obedience, and pardon on the ground of his passive obedience, or sufferings unto death. No such distinction, however, is made by the apostles; and as Dr. Wardlaw says in reference to this subject, there is no need for our being

more minute in our distinctions than these inspired men. Our being introduced into a state of pardon through the atonement of Christ, is justification.

It has been usual to call this a forensic transaction, or a proceeding in a court of law. Perhaps it would be more correct to consider it as an exercise of royalty; the putting forth of kingly prerogative, in extending mercy to a rebellious subject; the executive act of the Divine government in reprieving a criminal out of regard to something done to satisfy public justice.

Such, then, is justification; the opposite to condemnation; the act of God's boundless mercy in forgiving all the transgressions of the penitent believer, for the sake of the propitiatory sacrifice of his beloved Son; and restoring the once guilty transgressor to the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life. Well might David in a kind of rapture exclaim, "Blessed," or as the abruptness of the original more emphatically expresses it, "O, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity; whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

In considering this subject accurately and fully, four things are to be taken into consideration; the meaning of the term, or the blessing it designates, pardon: the ground on which it proceeds, the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for sin: the source from which it flows, the mercy of God: the instrumental cause or means, faith in Christ.

In this treatise I have to do with the latter, or the connection of faith with our justification.

If we are to be pardoned in a way of righteousness, it is plain we cannot be forgiven on the ground of a righteousness of our own, for we have not any. None

but a perfect obedience could be accepted by the law, as the ground of justification; and if we had that to offer, there would have been no sin, and therefore no need of pardon. Where there is no sin, there can be no forgiveness. Up to the time of his justification, the sinner is supposed to have been living in sin, and therefore has no works at all to offer as a satisfaction to Divine justice, on the ground of which he can be received into a state of favour. Hence the reiterated declaration; "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." In all these passages, and in others that might be quoted, it is most distinctly and emphatically declared, that justification does not proceed on the ground of our works.

There is but one other ground on which it can proceed, and that is faith. And this is as explicitly declared to be its ground. To quote all the passages of God's Word on this subject would be needless. In addition to those already given we may introduce the following: "The just shall live by faith." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." It is, then, impossible not

to see the high place which faith occupies in the business of our justification. But what is this place? What is its office? How does it justify?

I may put this first of all negatively, and show how faith does not justify. It does not justify of and by itself, as an act of our mind: as that for the sake of which, viewed in the light of a meritorious cause, God grants us forgiveness of sins. It is by faith, not for faith, we are justified. There is an expression which looks as if faith itself, as an act of ours, constituted our justifying righteousness. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." "We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness." "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Now it might seem to an ordinary and unreflecting reader, that the apostle intended by this mode of expression to convey the idea that Abraham's faith, of and by itself, constituted his righteousness; that his strong confidence in the Divine testimony was accepted in lieu of works, and as tantamount to a complete obedience to the Divine law. This is the view which Luther seems to take in his celebrated commentary on the epistle to the Galatians. But if this be true in reference to Abraham, it is equally true in reference to all believers who are his spiritual seed, and their faith is also their righteousness. And if this be true, it will appear that as faith is an act, and so a work, of ours, we are justified by works after all. True, it may be said, this is only a mental work. No matter, it is still a work. This on general principles, makes it clear that the apostle could not intend that

believing was accepted instead of doing, and constituted that righteousness on the ground of which Abraham was justified. The preposition rendered in our translation "for righteousness," might and should be rendered "unto righteousness." By believing on Christ as God's righteousness, or God's method of justification, a man becomes truly righteous, comes into the state of a righteous or justified man. We have the preposition so rendered in several places where the same subject is discussed. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." "Even the righteousness of God which is unto all them that believe." "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." This is the signification of the phrase in the verse before us, which should have been translated in the same way. The expression "unto righteousness" is elliptical, and signifies "unto the receiving" of righteousness, or in order to his becoming righteous. In the different French translations the meaning of the original is properly expressed, "a justice;" that is to say, unto righteousness. And in the same way in the Vulgate, "ad justitiam," to or towards righteousness. That faith itself, as an act of our own mind, is not the justifying righteousness, is demonstrably evident from the very phraseology of many passages that speak of belief and righteousness in the same place: "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." Here righteousness is supposed to be one thing and faith another. Righteousness is what we want in order to justification; faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as testified in the gospel, is the means through which we receive this righteousness. Believing then is not righteousness, but is the means by which

we become righteous. Can language more explicitly show that righteousness and faith are two different things for two different purposes, though both are enjoyed by the same persons, and both equally necessary? In like manner the apostle says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Here it is necessarily implied that faith is not righteousness, but that it is the means through which we receive righteousness. Nothing can be a greater corruption of the truth than to represent believing itself as accepted instead of righteousness, or as the righteousness that saves the sinner.*

Nor are we to understand that faith justifies as a mere sine qua non, simply as a condition, in the same way as repentance is a condition. God requires in the man who would be forgiven and restored to his favour, sincere contrition and confession, and the forsaking of his sins: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Now these things are conditions of pardon, yet we cannot with propriety and precision say, "We are justified by confession, sorrow, and repentance." This is the office and business of faith. There is a fitness, not indeed a meritorious one, but a natural one; that is, a fitness in the nature of believing, to accomplish this great end, our justification before God. For observe the nature of faith, it is "the confidence of things hoped for."

1. Faith believes our need of justification. It credits

* See Haldane's Exposition of the Romans.

the testimony of God concerning our condemnation by the law. No man will concern himself at all about pardon till he is convinced of sin. Here is its first exercise, to believe that "all the world is become guilty before God." "That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." That we are "all by nature the children of wrath;" that this curse of God upon sin is no slight one, but an everlasting separation from his presence. It is only by a belief of God's Word we know what sin is in its nature and consequences. Reason may discern that all is not right with us, that there is some disorder in the soul; but it knows nothing of the cause, the virulence, or the extent of the malady. It is revelation that lays open all this to us, that discovers to us our entire corruption; that shows us our alarming state, and our dreadful need of spiritual recovery. Here then is the first lesson which faith learns, and a most humbling one it is: that we are in a fearful state of condemnation by the law we have broken; that we are exposed to the wrath to come, to the bitter pains of eternal death, and that we need instant and adequate relief. True, this is not at this stage, saving faith; and if this were all a man believed, he would never be saved by it. Many do thus believe in the law, who never go on to believe the gospel, and have nothing more than the faith of devils, who believe and tremble. But though this is not itself a saving act, yet it precedes it. A man must believe he is lost before he will care about salvation.

2. By faith the sinner looks out of himself, away from himself, for the ground of his justification: this is its second step, or office. It turns away our attention from ourselves. As long as a man is only looking into himself, to discover what he can find there to stand be-

tween him and the God whom he has offended, he has not a particle of true belief in him. While he is saying, What can I do, he is turning away from the gospel testimony. Here we must recur to what has been already said, that belief is objective in its nature. It turns its eye outward, not inward. Its consideration is not what it can draw out of the soul, but what it can draw into it. When Noah was called to be saved from the waters of the deluge, he had to look away from his own resources; when the manslayer fled from the avenger of blood, he had to look away from his own means of defence; when the serpent-bitten Israelites were saved from the venom of the poisonous reptiles, they had to look away from their own skill in the art of healing; when the cripple that lay at the beautiful gate of the temple asked alms of Peter and John, they called on him to look away from his own misery and destitution. Precisely thus it is with the sinner seeking justification, he must look away from himself; and it is the especial business of the grace we are speaking of, to lead him away from himself. If justification were by works, he must be intent upon himself, look into his soul, calculate his resources, measure his ability: and this is the course of multitudes, till they come to have a clearer view of God's way of saving them. Their whole attention is concentrated on themselves, they think of nothing but themselves. But when taught by the Spirit of God, all is changed, they now see and feel that they are nothing, and can do nothing for their own justification. They find they are in debt ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay; that they are condemned by the law, and have no means of averting the sentence; that they are hungry and have no bread, sick and have no medicine.

It is the achievement of faith, to reveal to the sinner his utter penury and helplessness, to strip him of all his proud self-sufficiency and independence, to bring him to a deep sense of helplessness and hopelessness. But let it be still remembered, he is not even when brought thus far, arrived at the point of safety. He may believe all this, and perish after all. This is credence, but of a vague, general, incomplete nature; and if it stop here, it does not constitute a real reception of the gospel.

3. Faith confides fully and unhesitatingly in Christ. It not only sees there is no righteousness any where else, but it sees there is righteousness there: not only leads a man to look away from self, but to look to Christ. Noah not only looked away from his own resources, but he looked to, entered into, the ark with confidence, for he believed God's word. The manslayer not only looked away from his own strength, but looked to the city of refuge, and fled to it with confidence of safety. The serpent-bitten Israelites not only looked away from their own skill in the art of healing, but looked to the brazen serpent with confidence. The cripple not only looked away from himself, but gave heed to Peter and John, expecting with confidence to receive alms. In all these cases, there was confidence, reliance, expectation; in short, a true, firm belief of the reality and sufficiency of the promised relief; not only a sense of want and of utter helplessness and hopelessness in themselves, but an assured, hopeful, peace-giving dependence upon the provision of God's mercy. So it is with him who really credits the gospel: he looks away from self, and concentrates all his attention upon Christ. There is in his mind such a belief of the Divine testimony concerning him, as leads him by an act of his will, to commit his

soul with perfect confidence into His hands. Such a confidence not only renounces the sinner's own righteousness, but receives and depends upon Christ's: it not only says, "I cannot be accepted for my own works," but, "I can be accepted in the beloved." In turning away from self, and rejecting all self-righteousness, it does not stand in blank desolation, in ignorant solicitude, in hopeless despondency, looking hither and thither in vain for a tower of help; but it sees direct before its eye the cross of Christ rising up in all its grandeur and glory, as the sole means of reconciliation with God: it hears the voice of love and mercy issuing from it, "Look unto me and be ye saved:" it feels hope, springing up within its bosom, of acceptance with God, and exultingly exclaims, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I now commit to him." This, this is faith, justifying faith, saving faith; committing the soul to Christ, confidence in Christ.

Thus the soul goes out of itself to Christ, and is united to him; and in virtue of that blessed union, obtains an interest in all that is in him for the salvation of his people. Now, the merit of his obedience unto death passes over to the account and benefit of the soul that is thus brought into vital union with him. Now, the member receives all the vital influence of the Divine Head to which it is joined: now, the branch partakes the life of the true vine into which it is grafted: now, the stone receives the support of the sure foundation on which it rests.

These are thy doings, heaven-bestowed faith! These thy triumphs and thy trophies; precious, wondrous gift of God! The prison door has been broken open, the fetter has been struck off from the condemned criminal, the sentence of death has been cancelled, the royal clemency has been bestowed, and the reprieved man, redeemed by sovereign grace, walks abroad, singing as he goes, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

You are now prepared to see the force, as well as the meaning, of the apostle's language already quoted, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace:" and also of the parallel passage, "By grace ye are saved through faith." Grace means free favour on God's part, as opposed to debt. What is owed in the way of justice, cannot possibly be given in the way of favour. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end. It is grace viewed as a whole, and grace in all its details. Election is of grace. Regeneration is of grace. Sanctification is of grace. Conversion is of grace. And of course the same may be said of the blessings we are now considering. So says the apostle: "That being justified freely by his grace, we shall be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." How clearly and impressively

does grace appear in this method of our pardon and reception into the favour of God, by the mere belief of Divine mercy, the mere act of confiding ourselves into the hands of Christ. That one act of confidence makes and marks the wondrous transition from a state of condemnation to a state of justification. No lengthened service carried on through a series of years, no toilsome pilgrimages, no bodily macerations, no munificent offerings, no ascetic performances, no lofty moralities, no rigid self-denials, in which the mind may glory, and say, "See what I have done to merit the favour of God:" no; nothing of the sort: "Only believe" is the language of Christ. Can there be any thing less meritorious, any thing which more clearly demonstrates that it is all of grace, than this unmeritorious condition of our acceptance with God. And yet, can any thing more honour God? What confidence in his truthfulness, mercy, and love, does that act of committal imply. To throw ourselves on his promise, whatever may have been the number and aggravation of our sins: even at the last hour it may be, of a long life begun and continued in crime, like that of the penitent thief upon the cross, to believe that God's mercy can and will reach us there: to be confident that "The guilt of twice ten thousand sins One moment takes away." O what a triumphant confidence in the mercy of God, and the efficacy of the Saviour's blood! It exalts God as high as it lays the sinner low.

But here I stop to meet and remove an objection. "How," say some, "can justification be of grace, if it be granted to us for the sake of an atonement? Does not the idea of a satisfaction to public justice destroy the idea of free favour?" Not at all. If the atone-

ment were made by the offender himself enduring the full penalty of the law, his deliverance would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. Or if the sufferings of another could avail for the offender, and he himself were to provide the substitute, and it were a substitute which the injured party were under any obligation to receive, and could not honourably or equitably refuse, his deliverance in that case also might be matter of right, and there might be no grace in it. Or, if God were by any consideration of justice obliged to provide a substitute, and to send his Son to die as an atonement for us, grace would be excluded. But when the whole scheme was a matter of pure Divine benevolence, when God might have punished the sinner in his own proper person, and not have allowed of any substitution for him, when he freely gave Christ up to die upon the cross for us, and when this was in no sense designed to render God placable, (it was his own design) but only to harmonise his mercy with his justice, the grace is as rich, as full, as free, as if no atonement had been necessary. Nay, grace shines out a thousand times brighter through the medium of the cross, than it would have done without it. How rich, how wonderful that mercy, which, when there seemed no way for its consistent manifestation except by the death of Christ, "spared him not, but freely gave him up for us all." The cross of Jesus, while it is the meridian glory of Divine justice, is no less the noon-tide splendour of Divine mercy also.

The view we have taken of justification enables us to correct some errors which have been entertained upon the subject. We see the preposterous absurdity of the antinomian notion of eternal justification. A believer,

they say, is justified from all eternity, because he is elected to this state. On this principle he was created from all eternity. This is such an utter confusion of God's purposes and his acts, that it is a wonder such an offspring of human folly should ever have existed. If we are justified by faith, how can we have been justified before it?

Equally erroneous are those who would in any sense hold the merit of human actions in the sight of God, as is the case with the Roman Catholic Church. The following are the decrees of the Council of Trent, the last General Council of the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore the perpetual law of that apostate communion: "If any one shall say that men are justified either by the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, or only by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity, which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and which is inherent in them; or that the grace by which we are justified is the favour of God alone, let him be accursed."

"If any one shall say that the good works of a justified man, are in such sense, the gift of God, that they are not also his worthy merits; or, that he being justified by his good works, which are wrought by him through the grace of God, and the merit of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not really deserve increase of grace, eternal life, the enjoyment of that eternal life, if he dies in a state of grace; and even an increase of glory, let him be accursed."

Such, and so awful and daring, is the contradiction by that antichristian tyranny of the plain letter and pervading spirit of the Word of God. This is the

corner-stone in the foundation of that huge fabric of falsehood and error.

Perhaps it will be thought by some that the language of the apostle James, in which he seems to contradict Paul, sustains the doctrine of the church of Rome. In reply to this I say, if both were inspired, there can be no contradiction between them. There must be a medium to be found somewhere. True it is that Paul says, "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;" and equally true that James says, "That by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." It will be noticed at once by any reflecting mind, that the two apostles have two different classes of persons in view; one of them, the class to whom Paul addresses himself, consisted of the Judaising zealots who perverted the gospel by insisting upon the works of the law as the ground of justification: the other, the class to whom James addressed himself, consisted of those who abused the doctrine of justification by faith alone, to sanction the neglect of duty and the performance of good works. And moreover, as the two writers deal with two classes of persons, so they discuss two subjects: Paul is speaking of the justification of a sinner, James the justification of a Christian. Paul uses the word justification in its own generally accepted meaning of receiving the sinner into a state of favour and acceptance with God; James uses it in application to the Christian in the sense of his being approved as a believer. Paul shews how a man becomes justified, James shews the necessity of works to prove the reality of his faith, or to demonstrate that a man is a believer. So that there is no contradiction, but the most entire harmony between them; and neither

Paul nor James affords any countenance to the fundamental and destructive error of the Church of Rome, that the pardon of a sinner is by the works of the law.

But the view given of justification by faith reveals also the Puseyite error of baptismal justification. This, as I have already hinted, is a commonly received opinion among the Tractarian party, that the grace communicated by sacerdotal hands in baptism, conveys remission of sins as well as regeneration. Yet is it somewhat difficult to conceive how sins can be remitted before they are committed, if we except original sin. I submit with deference whether baptismal justification is not necessarily implied in the sponsorial service of the Church of England, as performed in the baptism of infants. In that service the sponsor personates the child, and believes for, or in the name of the infant. The child believes thus by proxy; in other words, he exercises faith through his representative. Now the Word of God assures us that faith and justification are ever united; consequently the infant is in all cases justified, as well as regenerated, in baptism. The priest obtains and confers regeneration, while the sponsor obtains and confers justification. At least, this is how it strikes me.*

* It is infinitely to be desired for the relief of thousands of tender consciences, both among the clergy and laity of the Church of England, that the offices of the Prayer Book, especially those appertaining to baptism, could be revised and altered. To those without the pale of that communion, it appears that though the Church of England is both historically and doctrinally decidedly Protestant (which if any man doubt let him read an Article in the Edinburgh Review for October, 1851, Vol. 94), yet it is vain to hope for the suppression of Puseyism and all its Romish tendencies as long as the Prayer Book remains as it is.

How have men by their traditions made void God's ordinances! In what clouds and darkness have they veiled his glorious doctrine of justification by faith! How have human systems been thrust between the sinner and the cross, so that the eye which should see nothing but the latter, has been made to rest upon the former; and the poor benighted soul been left on the way to eternity to stumble over the errors which have been cast in his path by those who should be his guides to everlasting life!

How much does this great fundamental Protestant Christian doctrine deserve our attention! This was the means by which apostles converted the world in the beginning of the Christian era. It was the perversion of this truth which called forth that terrible anathema of the apostle; "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Why these thunder claps of holy indignation; why these lightning flashes of excited zeal; but to terrify, and blast, and strike dead the man who would pervert the doctrine of justification, which Paul thus identifies with the gospel of Christ? The apostle, while he sets open the gate to any one who would come to the tree of life with simple faith, places a cherub with a flaming sword to repel the daring intruder who would approach to cut it down and plant the upas tree of error in its place. This was the doctrine by which more than by any other means, Luther effected the Reformation of the sixteenth century. This was the doctrine so dear to our Puritan and Nonconformist forefathers;

a doctrine which I fear some among us begin to think belonged rather to a Puritan age, than it does to our own. In the religious sentimentalism, in the superstitious formalism, in the continental transcendentalism, in the speculative theology, in the demand for, and homage to, talent and genius, which characterise our age, there is a danger of this glorious truth being lost sight of. Protestants, in some instances, are growing tired or ashamed of their Protestantism. The descendants of the Puritans are casting aside their Puritanism; not merely its uncouth phraseology, its scholasticism, its bad taste, and its formal creeds, but its substantial doctrines, its vital piety, and its earnest devotion. The next step in this declension is for Christians to outgrow their Christianity. We have a subjective religion rising up, which, as I have already remarked, aims to substitute intuitional consciousness for simple faith, and to give us inward light for the objective glory of the Sun of Righteousness. Men are casting off the old nomenclature of the Bible, and with the terminology will soon give up the theology which it expresses. I am no advocate for what is antiquated in the divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. But still how much of sound theology, of apostolic doctrine, of scriptural truth, is found under that old-fashioned dress! The noble thoughts and lofty views of such men as Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Knox, Cartwright and Ainsworth, Howe and Owen, are not to be set aside as worthless and puerile; men who studied the Bible in circumstances which, if not so favourable as our own for critical exegesis, were eminently conducive to their obtaining large and comprehensive views, deep experience, and earnest life; men to whom it was likely the

secret of the Lord, the mind of the Spirit, would be largely imparted. Let us then hold fast the substantial truths which those men held, not indeed because they held them, but because they are the true sayings of God. There are not only certain doctrines we cannot part with, but certain terms in which they are expressed, which we must ever retain; and among these is that grand and glorious word, or rather phrase, justification by faith. O, may there be none among us, to whom, in these modern days, this great Protestant truth when sounded forth from the pulpit shall savour of an antiquated Puritanism, and who would think that they were retracing their steps to the age of the Covenanters, if found reading or writing a treatise on this momentous topic! How can the sinner now live, how can the believer now walk, except by faith? The holiness, justice, and mercy of God; the authority of the Divine law, the nature of sin, the mediation of Christ, justification, sanctification, remain upon the pages of revelation like the sun, moon, and stars upon the firmament of heaven; and the mountains, rivers, seas, and valleys upon the earth; the same through all the changes of society, and all the revolutions of time. Piety will depart from that age in which justification by faith and sanctification by the Spirit cease to be the life of men's souls. These are the bread of life, and like the bread which supports our bodies, though it may be a little improved in the preparation, more separated from the chaff and more finely kneaded, yet must it always be from the same wheat, however the grinding and winnowing of it may be altered for the better.

How fully, satisfactorily, and delightfully does this subject answer the great question, which in all ages has

perplexed the troubled conscience, agitated the anxious heart, and baffled the ignorant judgment, of the human race, "How shall man be just with God?" To find an answer to this question all sorts of devices have heen invented. Even the heathens had dim notions of guilt, which struck scorpion-stings into their bosoms, for they knew that, "They did things worthy of death." Mysterious presentiments of judgment to come, equally intolerable, inscrutable, and unmitigable, harrowed up their souls, and forced upon them the awful inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" And they answered the question according to the suggestion of their own fears; and hence the long train of bloody rites, penances, and sacrifices, which superstition invented, and idolatrous nations practised, but without any other effect than to make them still more guilty and more miserable. But no sooner do we open the Scriptures of truth, and consult the oracle of God, than all this ignorance is removed from our mind; the yearnings of our heart are satisfied; the perturbations of our conscience are calmed; and we are restored to peace and hope by that wondrous language, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:

that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." There the great and awful problem is solved; solved in a way that dissipates every fear, and sets the anxious heart at rest. There God appears as just to himself, as he is merciful to us, while he forgives all our sins, receives us to his favour, and treats us as righteous. O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, in that wondrous scheme of which the cross is the centre and the symbol! Man, though a sinner, just with God; yet, at the same time, the law magnified, moral government upheld in all its perfection, and God's attributes of truth, holiness, and justice, no less conspicuously manifested, nor less brightly glorified, than his mercy!

How happy every justified man is, or might be. What melody, passing all the power of music, whether of earth or heaven, is there in the words already quoted, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Peace with God now; the glory of God hereafter; and the present rejoicing of hope in prospect of the wondrous, ineffable, inconceivable, future! Such privileges are too deep to sound with mortal lines, too dark, through excessive brightness, to view with feeble sense. It not only does not yet appear what we shall be, but what we are. We can as little comprehend all the present, as we can know all the future. What language can help us to draw out all the privileges contained in that one word, justification: that one phrase, an heir of God: that one blessing, peace with God? O thou that readest these pages, art thou justified? Hast thou good reason to believe that

this is thy state? Then rejoice: what could worlds of wealth added to thy possessions do for thee in the way of making thee richer or happier than thou art? How little, how mean, how insignificant, how valueless, do all the objects of human ambition or cupidity appear, when put beside these spiritual blessings in heavenly things and places in Christ Jesus! And what are all thy sorrows, thy cares, and thy losses, when viewed in the light of this happy condition? Tell me of thy poverty and many privations: I will reply, "Yes: but then think of thy justification!" Tell me of thy disappointed hopes and blasted schemes: "Yes: but thy justification!" Tell me of thy change of circumstances and the painful contrast of the present with the past, and all that thou once expectedst for the future: "Yes: but thy justification!" Tell me of thy friends departed, and thy now lonely and desolate condition: "Yes: but thy justification!" Thus to every tale of want or woe, where that tale comes from the lips of a believer in Christ, I will bring that one sweet, soothing melody for the troubled spirit, justification by faith. Cast whatever we may into the scale of our afflictions, it is but the small dust of the balance, when set over against this one eternal weight of blessedness that fills the other scale. He who is really pardoned, received to God's favour, delivered from the wrath to come, and assured of eternal life, should be ashamed to imagine that there is or can be a tear in his eye, which this blessing cannot wipe away, or a pang in his heart, which it cannot assuage. A respited criminal, a man just delivered from the prison and the drop, and raised to the hope of glory and honour just about to be bestowed on him, may not be supposed to think much of a few present privations and

inconveniences: every thing is mercy to him. Such, believer, is your condition; and in addition to this, you are going on from the peace of God now, to the glory of God hereafter. This is your song now in your weary pilgrimage, "Grace, grace:" and at every step you renew the sweet melody, and thus beguile the road. Soon, even that blessed song will be dropped, for one more blessed still, and you will go through eternity, singing, "Glory, glory!"

CHAPTER III.

FAITH IN RELATION TO SANCTIFICATION.

God created man in his own image, which consisted in holiness. No spot of guilt was upon his conscience, no spot of depravity upon his heart. The light of truth irradiated his understanding; the glow of perfect love warmed his heart; his volitions were all purity; his bosom was the seat of peace; and the beauties of holiness adorned his character. His whole soul was in harmony with the untainted scenes of Paradise, in the bowers of which he walked in undisturbed friendship with God. No sorrow wrung his heart, no care wrinkled his brow, no anxiety broke his rest. He passed away with awe from the mysterious tree of knowledge of good and evil, to eat with joy of the tree of life in the midst of the garden. He was happy, because he was holy. He sinned, and all his moral relations and conditions were altered: he fell under the condemnation of the law he had violated, and became the subject of inward corruption. An entire change passed over his nature, he not only became guilty, but depraved; his understanding became darkened, his affections selfish and earthly, his will prone to choose what is wrong, and his conscience benumbed. If he be recovered from this state of double misery, he must be

both pardoned and sanctified. His relation and his state must both be changed. Neither of these alone will meet his case. He has lost God's favour, and cannot be saved without being restored to that: and as he has also lost God's image, so neither can he be saved unless that too be restored to him. The covenant of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus, the glorious scheme of redeeming grace, meets the whole case of fallen man, by providing not only justification, but sanctification. Wonderful provision! Pardon for the guilty, sanctification for the unholy! The condition of the sinner may be likened to that of a condemned criminal shut up in prison, and infected with the jail fever; what he needs, is both the cure of his disorder and the reversal of his sentence: neither alone will meet his case; if he be only reprieved, he will die of the fever; if he be only cured, he will suffer the sentence of the law. So it is with fallen man, he is depraved and condemned; if he be only pardoned, his depravity will be his misery: if he could by any means be reformed, he is still under sentence of death. The glory as well as completeness of the gospel scheme is, that it provides a cure for the diseases of the soul in sanctification, as well as a reprieve from the condemnation of the law in justification.

The word to "sanctify," in its etymological meaning, signifies to consecrate, or set apart from a common to a sacred use. It is used as synonymous, or nearly so, with the word "to purify;" with this difference, however; that purification is sometimes employed in scripture in a generic sense, including both justification and sanctification. Where the purification is by blood, there it signifies justification: and where by water, sanctification. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

"Who hath washed us from our sins in His own blood." In these passages, the purification of the conscience, or pardon, is spoken of. It is in this view of purification also we are to understand the apostle, where in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he speaks of sanctification as if it were the same as justification. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Now the whole context proves that the apostle is speaking of pardon, not of holiness; and yet he uses the word "sanctify:" it must therefore be understood as one of the two specific varieties of purification. Justification, or pardon, being the purification of the conscience from guilt; sanctification being the purification of the heart and life from depravity. It is important to notice the apostle's use of the word sanctify just pointed out, in order to guard the reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews from supposing that in other parts of Scripture, and in theological terminology, where it means nothing more or less than holiness, it is confounded with justification.

Sanctification then means that work of grace which is carried on in the soul of the believer by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of Divine truth, whereby he is made more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness.

It will be perceived by an attentive reader, that there is an essential difference between justification and sanctification: the two always go together, but they are essentially distinct in their specific nature. Justification is a change in our relation to God: sanctification is a change of our nature. Justification is that which we receive for the sake of Christ's atonement: sanctification,

that which we receive by the work of the Spirit in us. Justification is complete at once: sanctification is progressive. In justification, we receive God's love to us: in sanctification, we exercise our love to God. Upon a right understanding of the difference of these two blessings, depends our correct knowledge of the whole scheme of redemption. All will be confusion in our ideas, if we do not perceive this difference. Our growth in grace will be impeded, and our consolation will be obstructed and diminished. Sanctification differs from regeneration, only as the progress of a thing differs from its commencement. Regeneration is the birth of the child of God: sanctification is his growth; in one the principle of spiritual life is imparted, in the other it is developed and exercised.

There is another distinction necessary to be observed, and that is, the difference between sanctification and the common morality of life. There are many persons who are very amiable in their dispositions, very just in their transactions, very excellent in all their social relations, very lovely in their general characters; but who, at the same time, whatever esteem and affection they may conciliate, are not in a state of sanctification. They have never been convinced of sin; have never exercised faith in Christ; have never been born of the Spirit; have never been brought to love God. All their loveliness of character is but a beautiful wild flower in the wilderness of unrenewed humanity. There can be no true holiness apart from the principle of supreme love to God. Till this is implanted in the soul, we are under the dominion of supreme selfishness: and all excellences may be traced up to self: God's law is not obeyed: God's glory is not sought, because God him-

self is not loved. There is, there can be no holiness, whatever there may be of what is called morality, if there be no love to God. Can that be holiness to the Lord in which God's authority is not distinctly recognized, nor submission to his will professed, nor his glory sought? In such a case, the very principle of holiness is wanting. And a melancholy spectacle it is to see so much general excellence of character as we sometimes witness, all fruitless, as regards another world, to its possessor, for want of that Divine principle which transmutes all this apparently beautiful morality into true religion.

Sanctification, then, is holiness; or that supreme love to God, and just love to man, which is required by the law of God. It is, as I have said, the developement and continued energy and exercise of the Divine life implanted in the soul by regeneration. If I described it in theological phraseology, I should say it is a dying more and more unto sin, and a living more and more unto righteousness: it is advancing in the Divine life: it is the mortification of our inbred corruption: it is the investing of our character with the beauties of holiness: it is becoming more and more like God in his moral character. All these are instructive and impressive descriptions of our sanctification; but still more so are the representations given of it in the Word of God. It is "the law of God written on the heart;" the "well of water springing up into everlasting life," "bearing much fruit," "being crucified with Christ," "being dead with Christ," "living unto God," "walking in newness of life," "walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit," "mortifying our members which are upon the earth," "not being conformed to

this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our mind;" "running the christian race with patience, laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us," "working out our salvation with fear and trembling," "following after charity," "being changed into the image of God, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God," "walking in the Spirit," "being filled with all the fulness of God," "abounding in love more and more, being filled with the fruits of righteousness," "being fruitful in every good work," "being blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke," "having our hearts established unblameable in holiness," "sanctified wholly," "being perfect in every good work," "being holy, as God is holy," "growing in grace."

All these passages, and innumerable others, describe the work of sanctification: and O, what a work! It is almost enough to terrify us to consider what we have to do, and how defectively we do it. In reading over these passages of sacred Scripture, we are ready to exclaim, "Who then can be saved," for "who is sufficient for these things?" And it is in reference to these it is said, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." "He of God is made unto us sanctification." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

In sanctification there is a Divine agency and a human instrumentality: the agency is the work of the Spirit of God; hence the expressions, "sanctification of the Spirit," "born of the Spirit," "living in the Spirit," "walking in the Spirit," "led by the Spirit," "sealed by the Spirit." To quote more passages would

be unnecessary. The whole work of religion in the human soul is Divine. Every holy perception, inclination, affection, volition, is from God. Our conservation in holiness is as much a work of the Divine Spirit as our conversion. It is he that "worketh in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure." It is he that in a way we cannot wholly comprehend, but which, from our own consciousness, we know is in no sense at variance with the laws of our mental economy, or our freedom of choice and action, makes us holy. Not that this is effected independently of means and instrumentality. If the Spirit is the agent, the truth as it is in Jesus is the instrumental means, of our sanctification. Holiness is not a physical, but a moral, creation; and the influence which imparts it is quite different from that physical power which moves, governs, and rules the material creation. The Divine power which regenerates and sanctifies the soul is of a kind peculiar to this work. It is, if I may so speak, a Divine, efficient, moral suasion: but the modus operandi is beyond our penetration. Frequent reference is made to the truth as the instrument of holiness. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth." So prayed the Saviour of the world for his apostles: in which petition he recognises at once the instrumentality of truth, and the efficient agency of God. So in another place; "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." To this effect are the words of the apostle, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification, and belief of the truth." "The Word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe." "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in

obeying the truth through the Spirit, . . being born again, not of corruptible seed . . by the Word of God." "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." In all these passages, and many more might have been selected, the truth is most clearly and positively stated to be the means of our sanctification. Now it is the work of the Spirit to cause this truth to be so attended to by the judgment, so understood in a peculiar and spiritual manner, and so felt, as to move the will of man to choose and pursue holiness, and to reject sin. You are not to imagine that the work of the Spirit annihilates the faculties, or destroys the freedom of the soul; he guides and directs those faculties by the spiritual light which he introduces. It is man's own act to repent, to believe, to love, to obey, according to the truth set before the mind; but the mind is led to that truth by the Spirit of God.

You now come very clearly to see the office of faith in sanctification. In the Acts of the Apostles we have these two expressions: "Purifying their hearts by faith," "and that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me." What in one place is called "sanctified," is in the other called "purified;" sustaining what I have said, that sanctification means purifying. It will be my business now to make it obvious that faith has to perform in sanctification a work as necessary and as important as it has in justification.

There are some writers who represent the system of faith set forth by the evangelical divines, as tending to weaken the obligations to holiness. They are able to understand how the law, with its precepts and penalties, should operate in keeping men from sin; but they do

not see how the gospel, with its promises and privileges, should conduce to the same end; forgetting, or indeed not understanding, what the apostle saith, that "by faith we establish the law."

Then there are others, who most willingly consent to the doctrine of full justification through the righteousness of Christ; but who, while they see pretty clearly the business of faith in this act of God's grace, do not see as clearly its work in sanctification. This it will be my business now to unfold.

1. Faith sanctifies by the respect which it pays to the whole Word of God. It must be borne in mind, as I have just said, that the work of sanctification is carried on by the instrumentality of the truth. The truth presents all those laws to be obeyed, in obedience to which sanctification consists; all those sins to be avoided which are opposed to it; all those motives to obey the one and avoid the other, which in the hand of the Spirit induce it; together with numerous examples of iniquity on the one hand, and righteousness on the other, which attract to holiness and repel from sin.

It is impossible not to be struck with the adaptation of the Bible to produce holiness. Every part of it, its precepts, threatenings, promises, examples, all are adapted to make men holy. It is a testimony against sin, and for righteousness. Some writers, in their misguided zeal for the work of the Spirit, have disparaged not only the Bible, but God's wisdom in employing it as his great moral instrument for the salvation of man, by affirming that there is no more adaptation in the Bible to convert the sinner, than in the wind which

blew upon the valley of dry bones to awaken the dead. They resolve the whole work of conversion into an arbitrary operation of God, irrespective of all means. This is to contradict the Word of God, which speaks of conversion and sanctification being carried on by the truth, and entirely to exclude the work of faith in this important business. It is by an intelligent understanding, and a cordial belief, of the truth, that it is made to bear upon the heart, conscience, and life. A man reads his Bible, in it, if he believes it, he sees the nature, necessity, means and motives of holiness; and it is by believing them his conscience is impressed with his obligation to practise it. Sanctification is not a series of blind impulses in the mind, of unmeaning raptures of the soul, or of mystic silence; but of intelligent acts of conformity to the will of God, as that will is made known in his Word; and it is only by knowing and believing the Word that it can be achieved. How powerfully sometimes is a single precept, threatening, promise, or example of the Scripture impressed upon the mind, in the way of deterring from sin or urging to holiness! But it is the firm belief that it is the Word of God which gives it all its power.

2. Faith sanctifies by the direct and prevailing regard it has to the work of Christ, as set forth in the Word of God. Sanctifying, like justifying faith, while it takes in the whole field of revelation, dwells especially on the scenes of Calvary. Thither it is drawn by an irresistible attraction, there it dwells with an intense delight, thence it derives its sources of consolation and motives to obedience. Yes, its great object is a crucified Saviour. Who does not add his "Amen," to the words of Watts:

"O, the sweet wonders of that cross
Where God the Saviour loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

Now the death of Christ, intelligently apprehended, operates in three ways for our sanctification. It presents the strongest motives to holiness by setting forth in the most vivid and striking manner, the holiness and justice of God, and his determination to punish transgression; the immutable authority of the Divine law; the evil nature of sin; and the fearfulness of falling into the hands of the living God. Not all the judgments God ever inflicted, nor all the threatenings he ever denounced, give such an impressive warning against sin and admonition to righteousness, as the death of Christ. The torments of the bottomless pit are not so awful a demonstration of God's hatred of sin as the agonies of the cross. There is another way in which the death of Christ apprehended by faith, tends to holiness, and that is by opening a medium by which our obedience to God can be accepted by him. Dr Chalmers, in a sermon upon "The Purifying Influence of the Christian Faith," has set this in a clear and interesting point of view. "It first takes away a wall of partition, which, in the case of every man who has not received this doctrine, lies across the path of his obedience at the very commencement. So long as I think that it is quite impossible for me so to run as to obtain, I shall not move a single footstep. Under the burden of a hopeless controversy between me and God, I feel as it were weighed down to the inactivity of despair. I live without hope; and so long as I do so, I live without God in the world. And besides, he,

while the object of my terror, is also the object of my aversion. The helpless necessity under which I labour, so long as the question of my guilt remains unsettled, is to dread the Being who I am commanded to love. I may occasionally cast a feeble regard towards that distant and inaccessible Lawgiver; but so long as I view him shrouded in the darkness of frowning majesty, I can place in him no trust, and I can bear towards him no filial tenderness. I may occasionally consult the requirements of his law; but when I look to the uncancelled sentence that is against me, I can never tread, with hopeful or assured footsteps, on the career of obedience. But let me look unto Christ lifted up for our offences; and see the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and which was contrary unto us, nailed to his cross, and there blotted out, and taken out of the way, and then I see the barrier in question levelled with the ground. I now behold the way of repentance cleared of the obstructions by which it was aforetime rendered utterly impassable. This is the will of God, even your sanctification, may be sounded a thousand times in the ear of an unbeliever and leave him as immoveable as it found him; because, while under a sense of unexpiated guilt, he sees a mighty mountain before him, which he cannot scale. But if the same words be sounded in the ears of a believer, they will put him into motion. For to him the rough way is made smooth, and the mountain and the hill are brought low, and the valley of separation is filled, and he is made to see the salvation of God. The path of obedience is made level before him, and he enters it with the inspiration of a new and invigorating principle; and that love to God,

which the consciousness of guilt will ever keep at a distance from the heart, now takes up the room of this terrifying, and paralyzing, and alienating sentiment; and the reception of this doctrine of atonement is just as much the turning point of a new character, as it is the turning point of a new hope; and it is the very point, in the history of every human soul, at which the alacrity of gospel obedience takes its commencement, as well as the cheerfulness of gospel anticipations. Till this doctrine be believed, there is no attempt at obedience at all; or else, it is such an obedience as is totally unanimated by the life and the love of real godliness. And it is not till this doctrine has taken possession of the mind, that any man can take up the language of the Psalmist, and say, 'Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds.'" In the death of Christ we see the most perfect model of holiness! He was sinless to the end, and gave in his death the most wonderful instance of cheerful, willing, and suffering obedience to the will of God, the universe ever witnessed! How stupendous an act of submission was it, that he who was in the form of God, should humble himself in the form of a servant to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. How much of our sanctification consists of obedience. What can we refuse to do in this way after we have seen what Christ has done? Then the death of Christ supplies the most powerful appeals to our gratitude and love. What can be so mighty in moving us as these states of mind! What will not fervent love and intense gratitude do! What sin will not a soul abandon, what duty will it not perform, that is under the constraining influence of the love of Christ! Here was

the apostle's motive to holiness: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

3. Faith operates to our sanctification, by the regard it bears, the credit it gives, to the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. I have already shown that it is by his agency the whole work of grace is carried on in the soul. But what assures us that we shall have the Spirit? What encourages us to expect this necessary aid? The numerous promises of the Word of God. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This is an absolute promise to be believed; and it is only one of many which might be quoted in which God engages to bestow his sanctifying grace. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." Now, the believer credits these promises; and believing, receives the gift of the Spirit. The grace is in the promise, so to speak; and it is the work of faith to draw it out from thence into the soul. It produces that waiting, dependent, expectant frame, to which God delights to give the blessing. It opens the soul to the coming blessing.

4. Faith unites the soul vitally to Christ, and thus draws from him all that grace which is in him for the spiritual welfare of his church. The true believer is a branch of the living vine, a member of the body

of which Christ is the Divine Head. As the branch derives its sap from the tree, and the member its life from the head, so the believer derives all sanctifying grace from Christ. All our life of sanctification, as well as of justification, is in him. "It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, that out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace." It is only as we abide in him, look to him, depend on him, we can have any measure of holiness. "In the Lord have we righteousness and strength." "Who of God is made unto us not only wisdom and righteousness, but sanctification and redemption." In my opinion it is the design of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, viewed in connection with the beginning of the eighth, to show that sanctification can be no more obtained by the law than justification: and that the former is as much in Christ for us as the latter.

5. But lastly, faith operates in sanctification by the regard it bears to the future world, as set forth before us in the Word of God. That world is represented as consisting of two states, heaven for the righteous, and hell for the wicked. These are believed by the real Christian. In reference to the former, his "faith is the confidence of things hoped for: the conviction of things not seen." He believes the reality, the certainty, the glory of the heavenly state; and knowing that it is prepared only for those who by holiness are prepared for it, he strives after that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." He looks up to the portals of immortality, and sees this solemn inscription, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they only have a right to the tree

of life, and may enter in through the gates of the city, who do his commandments." Reading this, he says, "I must be sanctified, or renounce all hope of heaven." Filled with this conviction he meets the fiercest temptation, with some such words as these,

> "In vain the world accosts my ear,
> And tempts my heart anew,
> I cannot buy your bliss so dear,
> Nor part with heaven for you."

Nor is this all, the representations which the Scriptures give of heaven, assist the work of sanctification. The heaven of the Bible is not a Roman elysium, a Mahommedan Paradise of sensual delights, a New Jerusalem transfer of earth to the skies: it is a holy world, a state of moral perfection, a condition of existence from which sin is for ever excluded: where the soul is wrought to a perfect conformity in thought, affection, and volition, to the image of God. The place is holy, its society is holy, its occupations are holy, it is, in short, the region of unsullied purity. It is, therefore, so represented to us, that it is impossible to contemplate it devoutly, to desire it longfully, to prepare for it truly, without growing holy. Every glance of the eye at its pearly gates, its gold-paved street, its nightless day, its sinless inhabitants, inflames the mind with a desire after greater sanctification, as the only meetness for all its glories. Hence it is said, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Men's characters are, if not actually formed, yet sustained and consolidated by the nature and quality of their hopes: so is the Christian's.

And then turn to the dreadful reverse, the awful, horrid contrast, the dark world of hell. That orb

of evil which draws all sin to itself. Scripture declares that unrepented, unmortified, unforsaken sin, shall sink the transgressor to those regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where neither peace nor hope can ever dwell. "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Dreadful description, and not more dreadful than true! Faith sees and trembles. It stands afar off, and hearing "the wailing and gnashing of teeth," and seeing "the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever," is filled with holy awe, and is prepared to pluck out a right eye, and to cut off a right hand or right foot, rather than be cast into that place, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is never quenched." Hell is as truly an object of Christian belief as heaven, and while the contemplation of the latter has a direct tendency to draw us to holiness, the former has a tendency no less direct, to drive us from sin.

Let us now meditate on the various inferences which this subject suggests to us.

1. It is scarcely necessary to insist upon the indispensable necessity of holiness to entitle us to the character of true believers. We are not, cannot be, Christians, if we are not changed in our moral nature from sin to holiness. Holiness was the image of God in which man was created in the beginning, which he lost by the fall, and to restore which was the design of the scheme of redemption. It is a mistake to suppose the chief end of Christ's death was to save us from hell. "He died to redeem us from

all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Without a new and holy nature, from which arise the fruits of righteousness in our character and conduct, we can be Christians only in name. Sanctification is as essential to salvation as justification, indeed it is a part of it. We must be born again, as the starting point of sanctification; and we must grow in holiness, as the evolutions and energies of the new life implanted by regeneration. Without sanctification, whatever amiable and lovely qualities we may possess, we are still the children of wrath, the enemies of God, the subjects of unrenewed corruption, the heirs of perdition, going on to everlasting destruction. An unholy man cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The laws of heaven forbid his entrance into that state: could he enter it, its blessed inhabitants would retire from him, as the healthy inhabitants of a town would shrink from a person who had come among them infected with the plague. He would find nothing in heaven to suit his taste; no one to associate with him: like a person under fever, he would be unable to relish a single viand at the heavenly feast, and recoil from the water of the fountain of life. But an unsanctified man can gain no entrance into that blessed world: and any expectation he may entertain of it, is but as the hope of the hypocrite, which will perish in the day when God takes away his soul; and he will be doomed to the bitterness of disappointment in that hour when he expected to rise to the felicities of fruition.

2. It is of immense consequence for professors to examine themselves to ascertain if they are truly sanctified. Profession is very common, and so is self-delusion.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These are words awful enough to fill the whole church with anxiety and alarm. How prevalent, according to this passage, is self-deception! Many will say this. How far it may be carried, even to the judgment seat! What unlikely persons are the subjects of it, professors, preachers, workers of miracles! I tremble as I write, I tremble for multitudes all around. Never, no never, were professors more in danger of self-deception than in this age. Never did a greater number fall into the danger. If the standard of true religion be the New Testament, then no small proportion of the members of all our churches cannot be true Christians, but are merely nominalists, evangelical formalists, and pharisees. Let any one study the Bible description of holiness, the setting forth of sanctification as we find it in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, the sixth, eighth, and twelfth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, the thirteenth of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians and Philippians, and the address of our Lord to the seven churches in Asia, in the book of the Revelation, and say if our churches will stand this test. Do we see the work of sanctification in their spirit, character, and conduct? Is holiness to the Lord inscribed upon them? Are they shining as lights in the world, so that men see their good works? Verily,

I trow not. The description of the church of Sardis is that which characterises the state of the christian world in this day, and a fearful one it is: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Let the call for examination then, be sounded forth. Let Christians try themselves on the subject of sanctification. Let them go into their closet in solemn seriousness, and with the Bible open and God's omniscient eye upon them, ask the question, "Is holiness my desire, my intense desire, my pursuit, my steady, vigorous, earnest pursuit? Do I subject all my wishes, my plans, my tastes, my purposes, to this? Do I deliberately will to be holy, not satisfying myself with vague desires? Do I hate sin as sin, and not merely because of its consequences? Do I resist it in thought, feeling, and desire? Do I mortify every evil corruption of my heart; and am I diligently employed in digging up its roots in my soul, as well as lopping its branches in my conduct? Am I striving after purity of heart? Is my aim to be freed from all sins as well as some; or am I endeavouring to atone for the retention of the sins I enjoy, by the surrender of others I am not strongly tempted to commit? Am I satisfied to be as holy as others; or am I striving to be as holy as God requires? Do I mourn over every degree of imperfection; and am I watching and praying against it? Am I striving after perfection, really endeavouring to be cleansed 'from all filthiness of flesh and spirit?' Do I feel that holiness is my very calling, and do I know that I am following it up as such?"

Ah, this is the test, and this the manner of applying it; and so applied, how many must be cut off from the true Christian hope! And yet is there any thing here

but what the Word of God contains? If we feel the conviction that we are not yet sanctified, let us not put aside the matter as a thing that, however it may be regretted, cannot be helped; and say, "If I am wrong, how many are in the same condition." True. But will that help you? Is it any consolation to perish in a crowd? Will it comfort you to go down to the pit with a multitude?

3. Let the true Christian pant after holiness. Believer, you are justified, and can never be more so than you now are. That work of grace is perfected, and what is perfect cannot be improved. There are no degrees in justification. "It is finished." Blessed thought! You are "accepted in the beloved." Your sanctification is the evidence of this. But sanctification has degrees. You "have not attained, neither are you already perfect. Forgetting the things which are behind, reach forward unto those which are before." Dwell upon the value, the blessedness of holiness, the peace of righteousness, the happiness of purity. In some respects sanctification is a greater blessing even than justification. Justification frees from punishment; but sanctification from the sin that deserves it. Justification saves us from hell; but sanctification gives us the temper of heaven. Justification gives the title to life; sanctification the life itself. Justification restores us to the favour of God; sanctification restores us to the image of God, without which even his favour would be no benefit. Justification is only the means, of which sanctification is the end: for our "conscience is purged from dead works, that we might serve the living and true God." Justification is a relative perfection; sanctification a personal one, and personal

changes are above relative ones. There is nothing in God to which justification is like; but sanctification is his very image. Justification is the blessing of a fallen sinner; holiness the blessing of creatures that have never sinned. Justification is the pledge of glory; sanctification its earnest. Justification is a benefit to the individual who possesses it; being one of those secret transactions which take place within the vail of heaven, and in the secret chambers of the heart; but sanctification is a social blessing; the change which it involves goes on in public, and by the power of example and influence, benefits those who witness it.

Besides all this, holiness is the end of all God's dealings towards us in grace and providence. If he chose us from eternity, it was that we might be holy. If he call us in time, it is to holiness. If he gave Christ to die for us, it was to purify us from all iniquity. If he pours out the Spirit, it is to sanctify us. If he gave us the Scriptures, it was that by them we might be made holy. If he chastise us by affliction, it is "that we might be partakers of his holiness." The carrying on of our sanctification runs through all his designs and all his plans.

Christian, see your work, your duty, your privilege. Grow in grace: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Be it your will also. You are not yet perfect. Seek to be so. Go on unto perfection. It is an apostolic command. Let nothing less satisfy you. It is your unquestionable duty to seek after it. You are not under the law for justification, but you are for sanctification; and that law demands perfect love, perfect obedience. Your justification by the gospel has not released you from the necessity for sanctification

by conformity to the law. The law tolerates no sin, but condemns every sin. To suppose that the law does not demand perfect obedience, is to say that it allows you to sin a little. To affirm that the gospel has abolished the law in its demands of perfect obedience, is to contradict the apostle, who says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea we establish the law." The law, which is the distant echo of God's own voice, is ever saying to you, "Be holier, holier, still." Be it your reply, "Yes, Lord, I will be holier, holier, still." Desire, yea long, yea pant, after more intense holiness. Your own comfort requires it. What troubles you like sin? What is your greatest disquiet, but your low degree of holiness? The "work of righteousness is peace; the fruit of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever." "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; but if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." God's glory requires it: He is honoured by his people's conformity to his image. Holiness is the reflection from his people's character of his own bright rays of moral excellence. Religion gains credit by it. Oh, what would be the commanding power of religion in our world, if all professing Christians were but seen to be eminent in sanctification, and striving after perfect holiness; devout towards God, just towards man, lovely in every social virtue; chaste, truthful, temperate and moderate in all things; in whom the beauties of holiness would be seen in all their attractions! How would the people of the world be struck

when they saw a higher morality than their own dead virtue animated by piety, and instinct with a divine and spiritual life! They might not love and imitate it, but they would admire it, and, like Satan before the seraph, stand abashed, and feel how awful goodness is. The sneers and sarcasms against the saints would cease, when the saintly excellences shone forth in all their splendour. Such forms of virtue would appear too sacred for contempt. It is the more eminent sanctification of the church that is wanted for the conversion of the world; and a holier church would make a holier world, and we cannot expect a holier world till we have a holier church.

But what are the means of obtaining greater sanctification?

We must feel we need it, which is not generally the case. Christians are lamentably content to remain as they are. Under the fatal opiate that there is no perfection in this world, they are reconciling themselves to all kinds and all degrees of imperfection. They are quite satisfied with a perfect justification, without seeking after a perfect sanctification. Next to feeling our need, we must cherish an intense desire after it: and this desire must manifest itself in the form of a deliberate purpose and fixed resolution. "I must, and God helping me, I will be, more holy," should be the determination of every believer. Men are afraid to bind themselves by a deliberate resolve, but they ought to do so. They will never be more holy till they resolve to be so. This state will not come by wishing, but only by willing.

There must be daily, and diligent, and prayerful study of the Scriptures. This is the divinely appointed

means of sanctification. We must read the Word, not out of a mere superstitious reverence for the Bible, as a book so much of which ought to be read every day, without any distinct object in perusing it, except to avoid the reproaches of conscience for not reading it: not simply to be acquainted with its contents, and to admire its sublimities of doctrine, or its beauties of poetry: not merely to furnish ourselves with the weapons of controversy; no, nor even to draw forth the waters of consolation, but to be made holy. We should approach the Bible with this prayer upon our lips, and going forth from the heart, "Sanctify me by thy truth." The spirit, as well as the name, of holiness pervades the Word of God: it is redolent with sanctity: an atmosphere of holiness surrounds it: and it is this we should endeavour to inhale in coming to its divine pages. If it does not make us holy, it does nothing for us effectually, and it is only as we are sanctified, that we enter into God's design in giving us the volume.

Nor must we omit the exercise of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We need as much to regard Christ in our sanctification as in our justification. There are perpetual allusions to this in the New Testament. Christ, as a teacher, has shown us by precept what sanctification is, in his Sermon upon the Mount. As an example, he has exhibited to us his own conduct; he was an embodiment of holiness, a living pattern of purity. As our atonement, he has made holiness attainable by us through the gift of the Divine Spirit conferred upon us, as a fruit of his mediation. By our union with him by faith, we derive virtue and efficacy from his mediation. Hence, we are crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, quickened with Christ,

risen with Christ, and walk in newness of life with Christ. On him our faith must be fixed, to derive from him all that is necessary for our new and spiritual existence.

And if we would increase in sanctification, we must be much in prayer for the influence of the Divine Spirit. Sanctification, as I have already shown, is his work; but for this work, he will be importuned by us in prayer. No man can be eminently holy, but by being much in his closet; for "this thing goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." In praying for the Spirit, we should understand what we ask, that we want to have our corruptions, those we have indulged and cherished, mortified; that we want to have right eyes plucked out, and right hands cut off. This is what we mean by being sanctified. Many people pray for the Spirit to make them holy, but use the term in the most vague and indeterminate sense, forgetting that holiness means the putting away of the very sins they love. No man prays with sincerity for Divine help in sanctification, who does not mean that he wants help to put away every sin he has, even the dearest or most gainful; and not only the greatest but the least. To ask God to sanctify us, and yet not to determine to renounce the sins we know we are committing is an awful mockery of God. When a worldly-minded professor prays to be sanctified, he means if he mean any thing, that he has really determined to put away his worldly-mindedness, and to become spiritual. When a passionate, or revengeful, or malicious professor prays for sanctification, he means that he has resolved to alter and improve his temper, and that he wants the Spirit to assist him. So if the covetous professor prays for

sancfication, he means that he has resolved to put away his love of money, and is really desirous that God would assist him to do so. Oh, the insincerity and hypocrisy of multudes in praying for the Spirit to make them holy! They do not want to be sanctified, and in asking for it, they do but add hypocrisy to all their other sins.

But where the heart is sincere, and the believer really desires to be made holy, where he can honestly say

> "Return, O holy dove, return
> Sweet messenger of rest!
> I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
> And drove thee from my breast.
>
> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from thy throne,
> And worship only thee."

In that case the Spirit will be granted, provided the blessing be asked in faith. Such a soul, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and beseeching the Divine help with fervour, and expecting to receive it, will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing God has more frequently promised to bestow, nothing he is more willing to bestow, nothing he is more glorified in bestowing, than his Holy Spirit to those who ask it for their sanctification.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOY OF FAITH.

In the opening of this chapter, I again look at Adam, as he was when he came from the hands of his Creator, and follow a similar train of remark in reference to his felicity, to that which commenced the last, in reference to his holiness. Man was made for happiness and was perfectly happy at his creation. The garden of Eden without, was but an emblem of the Paradise within his soul. The flowers which displayed their beauties and sent forth their fragrance; the fruits which hung like gems on every tree; the birds which carolled in every bower, and sent forth such music as the ear of even Adam in all his perfection delighted to listen to; and the glorious sun gilding the whole scene with splendour; were all but types of the joy, peace, and loveliness which reigned in the hearts of the tenants of the place. The image of God was impressed upon their souls, and it was accompanied with a peace that passed even their understanding and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Sin entered, and all was changed. Tears suffused their eyes, clouds gathered on their brows, pangs rent their hearts, groans were heard from their hearts; and it seemed as if the daylight of joy had faded for ever from our world in rayless night.

But mercy abandoned not our earth. In the first promise made to the guilty pair on the very spot of their transgression, a streak of light appeared on the darkened horizon; under the patriarchal age the day dawned; at the giving of the typical dispensation from Mount Sinai the morning star appeared amidst the clouds of Sinai; the sky appeared more and more ruddy during the prophetical dispensation; till at last the Sun of Righteousness arose at the advent of the Saviour, with healing in his wings; and brought back again, the peace that passes understanding and the joy unspeakable. And once more our dark disordered world is the abode of happiness.

The Bible everywhere speaks of the children of God as a joyful people. To be sure it does, how should it be otherwise? The children of God! The very expression implies it. Is it not every way to be expected that the children of God should be happy? If the children of wise, kind, wealthy parents upon earth may be supposed to be happy, how much more the children of God, whose infinitely glorious attributes stand all engaged to make them blessed?

Every thing bears out the assertion that the Word of God declares believers to be joyful. Predictions do so. "Men shall be blessed in him, yea all nations shall call him blessed." "Great shall be the peace of thy children." "Thus saith the Lord, behold I will extend peace to her like a river." Descriptions do so. "Blessed are the people whom thou choosest." "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven." "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." "Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." "In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable

and full of glory." Exhortations do so. "Be ye glad and rejoice in that which I create." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Examples do so. "Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized, and did eat their meat with gladness." "There was great joy in that city." "And he went on his way rejoicing." "He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." "Ye received the Word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost." Thus the uniform representation of the Bible is that the Lord's people are the subjects of joy and peace; and it is equally plain as to the means by which this is produced. This then is the subject of the present chapter, spiritual joy is produced by faith.

Now my first business must be to describe the nature of spiritual joy. Many mistakes are made upon this subject which it will be necessary to point out.

It is not necessary that there should be highly excited raptures, and lofty ecstasies of soul. These, in some cases, are mere animal excitement, or the workings of imagination. Persons of no religion, or of false religion, have sometimes, in consequence of their physical temperament, been as highly elated as others have been depressed. There is no question but that, owing to the mysterious connection between body and soul, much of what by an infelicitous, yet well-understood phrase, is called "sensible comfort," is owing to physical organization, or external influences working upon it. No doubt there have been, and are, not unfrequently, instances in which the view of spiritual things is so clear, and the faith so strong, that the soul of the believer is raised to an extraordinary elevation of spiritual delight. Men of sober judgment, such as

the pious Halyburton, the great John Howe, and Dr Payson, have recorded their experience on this subject, and told us that their joy on some occasions rose to ecstasies of delight so intense, that it seemed as if heaven were begun upon earth. Such elevations of holy joy are usually granted to the more eminent of God's children, but are reserved for them, either till the close of life, or until times of great trial. These therefore are not common occurrences: and no doubt a great deal of what passes under the notion of religious rapture is mere animal excitement, the fervour of a glowing imagination kindled by a coal from the altar of enthusiasm. None should be discouraged because they are strangers to such a state of mind. The stony ground hearers had joy of this kind, but it soon vanished. The joy of faith is usually of a much more sober character.

So neither is this joy to be confounded with a good flow of natural cheerfulness. Here again there is much in physical organization. Some persons are blessed with such a happy temperament that they are nearly always buoyant and gladsome. This, of course, is sometimes the case with believers as well as others, and their easy, lightsome temper falling in with religion, gives them the appearance and secures for them the character of "happy Christians." And so indeed they are, but a great part of the joy which they experience is to be set down not to their religion, but to their constitution. Such a constitution is itself a blessing to be thankful for, but it is not piety.

Nor does spiritual joy mean that delight which is experienced under exciting sermons, and the public means of grace, but is confined almost, if not entirely, to them. The eloquence of the preacher, the power

of music over the feelings, and the exhilarating effect of a large congregation, may produce very lively and pleasant emotions, and many persons think and speak of the high enjoyment they have had in religious exercises. But all their enjoyment is confined to these engagements. At home, and in the habitual frame of their minds, they know nothing at all of pure spiritual enjoyment; and even that which they experience in the house of God, or in the religious circle, is not the effect of truth perceived, believed, and felt, but of circumstances. Their attachment is not to the gospel, but to some favourite preacher, or preachers, and their enjoyment is in the sermon, and not in the gospel which is its theme. The joy of faith, though no doubt aided by the means of grace, is not dependent upon them, nor confined to them: and even while they last, it is not the eloquence of the preacher that produces it, but the doctrine which he exhibits. If you see some persons listening to their favourites, or hear them talking about them, you would imagine they were lifted up to heaven upon earth; but if you look at them at other times, you would see them without a gleam of spiritual joy; they are of the earth, earthly.

Spiritual joy is not worldly mirth and merriment carried into a religious profession. By many worldly-minded professors we are told, when reproving them for their sinful conformity to the customs and amusements of the age, "That religious people ought to be cheerful and not gloomy, and that a light and social temper is the best way to win the ungodly to religion." So indeed they ought to be cheerful, but then it should be in a way compatible with their profession. Nothing spectral, sepulchral,

ascetic, morose, should be seen in them. A Christian is a child of light, an heir of glory, a son of God, born from above, and travelling to heaven, and should appear to be sustaining the ills of time by the assured hope of a happy eternity. He should have inscribed upon his countenance as by sunbeams from Paradise, the word "happiness." But then his joy must be seen to be an emanation from his religion. This must be the impression which he should produce on those who see him, "Religion is bliss." He must draw men to his own crystal stream of happiness, not by partaking of the puddle with which they are endeavouring to satisfy their thirst, but by inviting them to the wells of salvation. Worldly amusements, and the mirth and the merriment they yield, are utterly uncongenial with the joy of faith.

What then is this joy? It is that cessation of painful solicitude, and apprehension of Divine displeasure, which is awakened by a sense of sin, and which is relieved by believing in our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is its first step, that gladsome state of mind which is the result of really crediting the glad tidings of pardon and eternal life by the gospel; that calm, peaceful, tranquil state of the conscience, which has been freed from a sense of unpardoned guilt; that inward satisfaction and pleasure which are the result of conscious reconciliation by God. There may be no rapturous delight, but there is a sweet serenity of mind, the very opposite of that perturbed and apprehensive state which is produced by the fear of Divine wrath. The object of this joy, or rather that which produces it, is the gospel, or the glad tidings of salvation; hence it is a rational joy, being produced by something joyful in itself: the cause of this joy is faith, believing this joyful object; hence

it is not a groundless feeling: the nature of this joy is a cessation of previous alarm and distress, coupled with a peaceful hope of all the blessings of salvation; hence it is unquestionably a happy state of mind.

But I now go on to consider how faith produces this joy, or how, as the apostle says, we come to have "joy and peace in believing."

There can be no mystery here. The subject is patent to all persons. In the common affairs of life, he that believes glad tidings concerning himself, must be made glad by them. If a man is in mortal sickness, and one come into his room with a medicine, and the assurance it will cure him, if he believes the glad tidings, he will be made glad at once. If he be in debt without means of payment, and one come and assure him he will pay all he owes, if he believes these glad tidings, he will instantly be made glad. If he be condemned to die, and one come and tell him he is reprieved, if he believes the glad tidings, he will instantly be made glad. Now all this is very plain, glad tidings make glad the heart which really believes them. In all these cases, the joy is not the joy of doing, for these persons are supposed to do nothing, and can do nothing, but it is the joy of faith. The object of their gladness is not something in themselves, but something out of themselves. The cause of this joy is not what they have done, but simply believing what others have done, or will do for them. Precisely thus is it with respect to faith in Christ; the gospel brings glad tidings of great joy, the sinner believes them, and in believing is, and of necessity must be, made glad.

1. To see this more clearly, let me notice what these blessings are which the Christian believes to be

contained in the gospel. Are they of such a nature as to be likely to produce and justify delight, so that a wise and prudent man would not hesitate in doubt whether there is any thing in them that deserves his rejoicing? No man ought to expend his joyous emotions over an unworthy object. It is the mark of childhood to be delighted with toys, and of folly to be pleased with trifles. And it is equally the mark of a stoic, a savage, or a brute, not to be made glad by immense and boundless privileges. Take only one passage as containing a summary of Christian blessings, "He of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Here are blessings, immense, infinite, and eternal: blessings than which, Divine all-sufficiency has nothing greater to bestow, nor man any thing greater to receive: blessings before which all the objects of earth and earthly ambition fade into darkness and dwindle into insignificance: blessings which supply every want, and remove every woe that sin has introduced: blessings which provide wisdom for the ignorant, pardon for the guilty, holiness for the depraved, and a full redemption for the lost. If these blessings are not great, there is nothing great in heaven above, or in earth beneath, and the whole world is a collection of insignificant trifles. He who could really believe such things, and that they really are his, and not be joyful, must be an anomaly and contradiction in the universe. It would be to believe the greatest, best, and gladdest tidings that could be announced, and yet to receive them all without a smile.

2. It is not only the greatness, but the certainty of these things which is realised by a true belief. They are not cunningly devised fables, religious speculations,

the works of an imagination inspired by enthusiasm, ecclesiastical legends, priestly impositions, but divine realities, as true as they are vast. This is the exulting language of the Christian, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." He ranges over the whole field of proof; sees all the evidences of the truth of the gospel narrative; weighs each by itself, and feels the cumulative force of the whole. "No, no," he exclaims, "I am not, cannot be, deceived. I have the witness in myself. I not only can adventure my own soul upon this foundation, but I could trust a thousand souls to it if I possessed them. Noah, sitting in his ark, and trusting its preservation and guidance to its Omnipotent Pilot, did not feel more secure amidst the wild uproar of the deluge, than I do in my ark, which is Christ. I am safe. All the attributes of God are my guarantee." This certainly is essential to enjoyment; for the greater the blessings, the greater the misery of any doubt about their reality. When the believer is giving himself up to the bliss of his state, possessions, prospects, and hopes, as a Christian; letting his feelings swell to an exuberance of delight, while he plunges into the depths, and soars into the altitudes, of his spiritual mercies, what a chill would come over him if he suspected that all this might prove the baseless fabric of a vision. What a felicity it is that our greatest blessings are our most certain ones.

3. The believer realises his own personal interest in these blessings. They are not blessings for others

only, but for him. He appropriates them as he is invited to do, to himself. It is the true nature of faith, and there is no true faith without it, to claim a personal interest in all that God's love has bestowed, all that Christ died to obtain, all that is promised in the Scriptures, all that heaven contains. Under every promise of spiritual blessings, every invitation to the Saviour, every prospect of eternal glory, he writes, "Mine, all mine!" "What would salvation be," he exclaims, "if it were only a vast domain belonging to others, but not to me; over which I should look, as I do over the noble mansion, park, and gardens of some rich man, only to congratulate him as the proprietor. The glory is, that I am myself, through God's rich grace, lord of all the vast domain. I can point to the cross and say, my Saviour; to the throne of the eternal, and say, my Father; to the covenant of grace, and say, my charter; to the church of Christ, and say, my New Jerusalem; to heaven, and say, my home; and to eternal life, and say, my inheritance." Well might Luther say, "I love the Bible for the pronouns, 'mine,' and 'thine.'"

Here, then, is the operation of faith in producing joy: it believes the glad tidings of these blessings, as contained in the gospel of Christ. It is not only the means of his joy and peace when first convinced of sin, and led to believe in Christ, but through every future stage of his progress, he turns by faith to the cross as his only ground of hope. He never outlives his need of, nor his delight in, his dying and his living Lord. It was to establish believers, that the apostle said, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice." Yes, in the Lord. Christ is the object of the Christian's joy;

Christ, in the glory of his person and of his work; Christ, living on earth, dying on the cross, interceding and reigning in heaven; Christ in his first advent and his second coming; Christ, as our example and atonement. What a boundless, fathomless ocean of joy is Christ! If the material sun be so glorious in the eyes of the natural man, how much more glorious is the Sun of Righteousness to the spiritual man. To this, when the eye of flesh grows dim in death, the eye of faith turns with delight to the last. As much when one of the men, or the fathers in Christ, as when a babe, he cries, "The cross, the cross, is all my salvation." Under every new sense of sin, new discovery of corruption, and new view of God's justice, he turns believingly to the gospel testimony. Hoary in years, and rich in experience, he still draws all his comfort by faith from the glad tidings of salvation.

But there is also another object of faith which fills him with joy, and that is, the heavenly inheritance. It is in reference to this that the apostle says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." But I reserve the consideration of this for a separate chapter.

But it is important for me now to observe that besides this joy of faith there is in the Christian life another kind of joy, and that is the joy of holiness. True it is,

that holiness is the product of faith, and thus indirectly the joy of faith and of holiness are one. But what is now meant is that holiness itself is a direct and immediate source of joy. Hence, it is said, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Holiness is, and must be, happiness. God is the blessed God, because he is the holy God. Angels are happy, because they are holy. Adam was happy at his creation, because he was holy. The spirits of just men made perfect are happy, because they are holy. There cannot be two principles more true, more impressive in themselves, or more important to be held up to public consideration than that sin is misery and that holiness is happiness; they are a proof of the government of the universe. Is it not in every believer's experience a felt truth that joy and sorrow are the two scales in the balance of his soul, which are ever regulated by his sin and holiness? How miserable is he when his corruption prevails; how often and how agonisingly does he exclaim under these circumstances, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death!" Sin is itself a part of hell, and hell is but the sink of all sin and wickedness, which will finally draw to itself the sin of the universe. And with something of the nature of hell, sin contains something of its misery. While on the other hand, holiness is heaven, in its nature, and in its felicity. It is the best thing God has to bestow upon us either in this world or in that which is to come, for it is his own image and his own bliss. Wherever there is holiness, there is something of God and something

of heaven. Heaven is continually drawing up holiness to itself, and sending down something of itself to those hearts in which holiness is now found. Let the believer, therefore, while as a sinner he is ever drawing in the joy of faith from the cross, ever as a saint be promoting that holiness which of itself is the meetness and foretaste of heaven. "Nothing without us," says the learned Cudworth, "can make us as believers either happy or miserable; nothing can either defile us or taint us, but what goeth out from us, what springeth up and bubbleth out of our own hearts. We have dreadful apprehensions of the flames of hell without us: we tremble and are afraid when we hear of fire and brimstone; whilst in the mean time we securely nourish within our hearts a true and living hell. The dark fire of our lusts consumeth our bowels within, and miserably scorcheth our souls, and we are not troubled at it. We do not perceive how hell steals upon us while we live here. And, as for heaven, we only gaze abroad, expecting that it should come in to us from without, but never look for the beginnings of it to arise within, in our own heart." Understand then that Christian joy in its most perfect form springs from holiness. It is in this view of it the joy of the Lord; arising from the same causes, directed to the same objects, and yielding the same results, as that which Christ himself, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, possesses without measure. It is our sympathy with God in his infinite blessedness, our fellowship with him in happiness.

Christian joy arises also from a belief of God's exceeding great and precious promises, in all their applicability to the ever changing conditions and circumstances of the believer's life. In whatever situation

of want or woe, care or fear, he may be placed, if he realise only one gracious assurance of the Eternal Word, he rejoices in it as one that has found rich spoil; and feasts as upon dainty food. I have known saints, who, though in deepest distress, have found a single text sufficient to fill them with unspeakable peace for days.

It is, beautifully, instructively said, of this state of mind, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." This exactly accords with a law of our mental economy and physical nature: sorrow, especially when it is deep, relaxes our energies, enfeebles our strength, and indisposes us for action. The man oppressed with grief lies down and weeps, and turns from exertion with loathing and disgust, as a man in a fever does from food. While on the other hand joy incites to activity. When the cripple who was cured by Peter and John regained the use of his limbs, he was thrown into an ecstacy of delight, and went into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. Joy is the sustainer of all our energies, the impelling principle of all action and achievement in the service of our Lord. It is as oil to the wheels of obedience. If we look into the world around us, we find that it is the joyous men who accomplish almost every good or noble thing done under the sun. The spirit of man must work joyously, or it cannot work successfully. Who can do anything that requires labour, perseverance, and self-denial, without buoyancy of mind? Gloom and sorrow extinguish the most ardent ambition, clip the wings of the aspiring soul, load the feet of activity as with thick clay, and paralyze the hands of labour. Hear the husbandman whistling at his plough, or the sower carolling as he goes, to the merry laugh of the haymakers, and mark

how in their humble departments of human activity, joy helps them to bear the heat and burden of the day. So it is in spiritual things. The joy of the Lord is as far above all other kinds of joy, as holiness is better than other kinds of excellence. It not only gives life and spirit to all the mental powers and operations, but it enables the mind to throw its own inward light upon all the objects which it contemplates. The eye of the mind is like that of the body in this respect, that it imparts its own hue to all without. There is all the difference between spiritual objects when viewed in a joyous and a gloomy state of mind, that there is between a beautiful prospect surveyed in a state of visual disease and health. God with all his glorious perfections, Christ in all his offices, and heaven with all its honours and felicities, depend for the pleasure they impart, upon the state of the mind. As the orb of day is not brilliant to the melancholy man, so neither is the Sun of Righteousness to a dark and gloomy Christian.

Dwell upon the influence of joy on the pleasurable and profitable attendance upon the means of grace. In this state of mind how precious is the Bible, and how eagerly read; how delightful prayer, and how readily performed; how agreeable the sermon, and how attentively listened to; how solemn the Lord's supper, and how willingly observed. The fire of devotion never languishes while fed by this fuel; nor does its spirit ever tire while this is its prompter. And how soon do we grow weary of all in its absence! The joy of the Lord lifts up the soul to heaven and keeps it there, communing not only with the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, but with God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Cove-

nant. Yea, it is this which helps to sustain all the graces of the soul in lively exercise. Springing in the first instance from faith, it re-acts upon its first principle, and strengthens that. Love exists apart from joy, but rarely flourishes apart from it. Joy imparts vigour to the pinions of hope, as it soars upward to its heavenly and eternal objects. It gives to patience its power of endurance, and to charity its spirit of kindness and its smile of benevolence.

Who needs be informed of the power of the joy of the Lord even in the time of sorrow? "It gives to affliction a grace, and reconciles man to his lot." We know that it is faith and hope which mainly support the soul in the dark hour of trial, but is it not by joy that faith and hope are made perfect? What said the apostle? "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." And again, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." What trials can overpower the soul rejoicing in God? Hear its triumphant song. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." This sunshine of the soul has not only illuminated the chamber of sickness, or lighted up "the dark valley of the shadow of death," it has thrown its lustre on the walls of the dark, damp dungeon of the prisoner, aud has enabled the martyr to pour forth his swan-like melody on the scaffold or at the stake. In our conflict with the world, this, next to faith, and as the result of it, is our mightiest weapon.

The soul filled with holy joy, will gain an easy conquest over this enemy. How dim will the lustre of the world seem, when compared with the brightness of those objects which impart a peace that passes understanding. Rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, and in the hope of heaven, it will behold no glory in things seen and temporal, by reason of the glory that excels all others. In turning from spiritual to worldly delights, it will seem as if invited to turn from angel's food to the crumbs of beggars. The Christian knows by experience that his victory over the world is regulated by the enjoyment of his religion. A lukewarm love to Christ and delight in him is sure to be attended with an ardent love to the world. While on the other hand, the bright shining of his spiritual delight puts out the flames of his worldly love and joy.

How mighty is joy in all the great enterprises of Christian benevolence! The miser's heart, like the ice of the pole, never melts, for he is a stranger to spiritual joy. The worldling clutches his treasures under the influences of a joyless soul: and even the Christian finds a religion barren of pleasure, to be barren also of beneficence. Were the Church of Christ full of joy, it would also be full of liberality. A soul rejoicing in the full assurance of faith and hope, and replete with the happiness of love, must be replete with the feelings of benevolence. "The wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable," and as a consequence, it is "full of mercy and good fruits." This is the great desideratum of the times we live in. Let us have what societies we may, and far more wealth than we possess, there cannot be the character and temper necessary for the world's conversion, till God shall send abroad the

spirit of holy joy into the hearts of his people. What we want is, a more intense devotion and a more heavenly temper. More joy will make us more self-denying and more self-sacrificing. How would our treasure flow forth, and our prayers with it, if we were but the partakers of that Divine delight which would make the gratification derived from wealth seem to be as nothing. How much of ministerial labour to rouse the slumbering zeal, and to call forth the reluctant and grudging liberality, of Christians might be spared, if the souls of believers were partakers of this fruit of the Spirit. This would supersede every thing else; and they would be a law to themselves. The world would soon be lifted up into this sunshine of the church, if the church really possessed it.

I cannot refrain from again presenting a long extract from an exquisitely beautiful essay on this subject by an elegant American writer: "Assuredly, we want nothing else to replenish the treasury of the Lord, and supply all requisite resources, but that the hearts of Christians should cease to be so void of that sensible enjoyment of God, with which they should be always full. Had the church but that fountain within herself to draw from, rivers of treasure, if needed, would be at her command; and she could supply at once, the very ends of the earth, with the means of salvation. She would have a missionary in spirit in each of her sons and daughters. It is this blessedness I speak of, which looses the tongues of Christians, and makes them eloquent in teaching every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, that knowledge of God and Christ which is unto life eternal. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, said the mourning Psalmist, then

will I teach transgressors thy ways. It would wing their feet for swift journies through the length and breadth of the earth, and the glad tidings of saving love would spread from land to land, and be heard in every island, every hamlet, every dwelling on the globe, before the present generation has passed away.

"And finally, we are not sure, that if the joy of the Lord pervaded the Christian church, to the degree to which it might, and by all means should extend, the work of saving the world would not go on of itself, almost without labour. Certain it is, that in that condition of things, labour would itself be joy; but may we not believe, (now that Christianity is no stranger in the earth, but has for eighteen hundred years been giving infallible proof of her celestial descent, and her continued connexion with the place of her origin,) that the necessity for patient and agonizing effort, if the church were in the state supposed, would be superseded?

"Heaven then would in a sense come down to earth; the tabernacle of God would be with men; and mankind would know and see the place of happiness; and would they not also by the grace of God, through the operation of that new spectacle, be drawn thitherwards as of themselves? The nature of man still inclines him after happiness. The disappointment of six thousand years has not abated the strength of this indestructible propensity. Who can tell but that such a sight as the general church of Christ, filled with the joy of the Lord, would, under the Divine blessing, determine that propensity to its proper end? That it is of all things the best adapted to have this effect, is certainly a good reason for supposing that the

Spirit of grace, who is also the Spirit of fitness and order, would prefer it before any other instrumentality. For our own part, we cannot but think it would do more in a few years, independently of labour, than the labour of many ages without it. It would make the church a wonder in the earth. The mountain of the Lord's house would stand upon the top of the mountains; it would be illuminated with Divine glory; its lustre would outshine that of the sun; it would enlighten the world; the remotest nations would see it, and would not all nations flow unto it?

"The world hitherto has not regarded the church as the seat of blessedness. It has had too little reason thus to regard it. Religion, by old report, is happiness; but it is religion as contained in books, not as dwelling in the hearts, or as shining out in the examples, of its professors. With comparatively few exceptions, since the primitive times, the lives of Christians have misrepresented the spirit of their religion. The world have judged it a sour, unhappy, gloomy spirit; and they have not wanted occasion to do so. They who have called themselves Christians have seemed little happier than others. The great majority of them have practically declared their religion a gloomy thing, by going to the world itself for pleasure. Of the rest, the generality seem to pass through life, either with just enough of interest in religion to keep their membership in the church; or in a cold perfunctory preciseness; or in austerities which make religion identical with penance; or in a forced driving zeal, which bespeaks more of fierceness than calm heavenly peace and joy. A few noble exceptions indeed there have been, but to the world's eye these exceptive cases have commonly been

lost, in the multitude of their gloomy or earthly-minded brethren.

"Has not the church been the dwelling-place rather of doubt and fear, than of sensible delight in God? Is it not the way of even the best of her members to be habitually questioning in themselves whether they be not reprobates, instead of exulting in the full assurance of hope? Besides, has not the church been almost continually a scene of contention, and confusion, and bitter wrath, a dread and terror, rather than a charm to the world? Oh, let it not be said that the experiment of what may be done to save the world by the influence of a general example of spiritual peace and joy has yet been tried. Enough has been ascertained to encourage the highest expectation; the successes of the first Christians, the fruits of the individual examples of such blessed men as Baxter, Flavel, and Edwards, beget the greatest confidence as to what would be the result of the experiment; but the experiment remains to be made. Come the day when it shall be in full operation. Hope is fixed on the appearance of that period, and that it will appear, can there be a doubt? Have not the prophets declared it? The Lord in his compassion cut short its delay; make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and so a praise in the earth; give to all Christians, in answer to the prayer of Christ, that unity of soul, in which the Father and the Son are united to each other, the unity of Divine love and joy. Then shall our unhappy world learn the error of its way, forsake the broken cisterns of sin, and come to the Fountain of living waters."

I will now just glance at the more prevailing obstructions which hinder this joy, even in true believers.

A morbid physical tendency to gloom and depression is in some cases, all but an insuperable barrier to this state of mind. A cloud, impervious to the rays even of the Sun of Righteousness, perpetually hangs over, or occasionally comes over, some minds, throwing its dark and chilling shadow on their troubled bosoms. I do not mean a cloud so dense as that which wrapped the sensitive mind of poor Cowper in constant spiritual night, a settled religious melancholy, an almost total eclipse of the spiritual orb. Alas, for this there is no cure; and the hopeless patient can only be soothed with such palliatives as judicious friendship can supply. But the cases to which I now allude amount only to a tendency to nervous depression; which, though unattended by absolute despair, or constant cheerless despondency, leads the subjects of it ever to write bitter things against themselves. What minister has not met with cases of this kind; cases of even eminent Christians, who, amidst holiness, gentleness, and beautiful consistency, often walked in darkness and saw no light? Yes, ye hypochondriacal children of God, I have known you, sympathised with you, and encouraged you; and sometimes to little purpose. Your harp was upon the willows, and I saw you had no power to take it down: a morbid state of sorrow had paralysed your hand, and you could not sweep its strings. Let me remind you of one thing; religion is not all feeling, but willing; and when the nervous system is weak, the will may be strong. You cannot, perhaps, rejoice, but you can confide; you cannot sing, but you can submit; you cannot be happy, but you can hope, and sometimes it must be against hope. Yours is a physical, not a moral defect: it is weak nerves, rather than weak faith. You must

say, "Well, I feel I cannot expect to go on my way rejoicing, but I will still go on; and though I cannot serve the Lord with gladness, still I will serve him. I can be holy, if I cannot be happy. I cannot dissipate the cloud, but I will try to say, "'I through the cloud believe thy grace, secure of thy compassion still.'" There have been cases of this kind, in which I have ventured so far as to say, "Let others judge of your case for you."

Imperfect knowledge is another of the causes of want of spiritual joy. The darkness of sorrow is often produced by the cloud of ignorance. Christians are often but imperfectly brought out of the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel. They dwell too near Sinai, and are ever hearing its thunders, scared by its lightnings, and terrified by its earthquakes; and yet are endeavouring to find shelter in their own doings. They are, at any rate, only half-way between Sinai and Calvary; near enough to the former to be alarmed by the terrors of its justice, and not near enough to the latter to live in the light of its mercy. They are looking for that in themselves which is only to be found in Christ. They do not understand that simple injunction, "Rejoice in the Lord." They do not clearly see the cross in all its glory and design; that the work of redemption and salvation is not ours, but God's; that Christ has taken away our sins; has redeemed us with his precious blood; has reconciled us to God. They are ever trying to do the work themselves, and finding that they cannot do it, instead of rejoicing that it has been done for them. They do not understand, or cannot believe Christ's dying words, "It is finished:" but they want to finish it themselves. Now there can be no

strong, steady, shining light of joy, only flashes of it, till the eye of faith, instead of occasionally glancing at the cross, and then beholding it through a mist, rests upon it as seen in cloudless splendour.

Many good people suffer a sense of their remaining corruption to extinguish their comfort. I would not of course take any one off from observing, acknowledging, mourning, and mortifying his corruptions, nor make him reconciled to his imperfections. I would not check his penitence, lift him above humility, or stop the work of self-crucifixion; but to be always mourning over corruptions, and never rejoicing in the provision made for the pardon and removal of them, is not the way to cure, but to perpetuate them. The way to kill some weeds is to let in a full blaze and power of sunshine upon them; and one way of destroying our corruptions is to expose them to the smile of spiritual consolation. Other weeds wither in the shadow of a neighbouring plant. Imitate this process, and raise up your spiritual joy, to cast a chilling shade over your corruptions. Holiness often exists apart from joy, but it seldom flourishes apart from it.

But there is a still more prevalent cause than any yet mentioned for the deficiency of spiritual joy amongst professing Christians; I mean the low state of their personal godliness; and owing to this it is neither possessed nor even desired by the great bulk of professing Christians. Had they no more happiness than what is furnished by their religion, they would be the most miserable of God's creatures; for that yields them none. They may have a certain kind of pleasure in the excitement of public worship, and the activity of religious zeal; but as to the peace of faith,

the joy of the Holy Ghost, and real rejoicing in the Lord, the happiness that springs from believing the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, the felicity which is connected with true holiness; of this, what do they know, or what do they wish to know? They can do without it. It is in no sense essential to their enjoyment. Sin and joy cannot dwell together in the same bosom. "This little hand," said Whitfield, placing his hand near his eyes, as he was preaching in the field, while the glorious sun was flooding creation with his beams, "this little hand hides all the lustre of the sun from my eyes; and so a little sin may involve the soul in darkness, though the spiritual world be all bright as heaven itself." To pretend to religious joy while living in sin, is the last stage of soul-delusion, and the last degree of induration of heart. And worldliness is no less destructive of spiritual peace than actual sin. Many an individual whose eye will wander over these pages, will, though he may have lost all the comfort of religion, have enough of its reminiscences left to sigh, and say,

"Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord;
Where is the soul-refreshing view,
Of Jesus and his Word?

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

Let such persons determine to remain no longer in this disconsolate state. The way back to their former condition is still open. The sunny regions of heavenly peace are still accessible. The light of God's countenance may still be enjoyed by them; and Egyptian

gloom exchanged for the illumination of Goshen. But their coming back must be in the spirit of the other part of the hymn,

"Return, O holy Dove, return
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

"So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."

CHAPTER V.

THE WORK OF FAITH.

Man is made not only for contemplation and emotion, but for action. Activity is an essential condition of human nature; our faculties seem scarcely to exist but in exercise. Every thing in our world is in motion, and in God's great system, there is neither vacuum nor quiescence. The wheels of nature and of Providence are not made to roll backward or to stand still. An idle man is one of the most miserable of God's creatures, and woe be to him who is self-doomed to suffer the pains and penalties of indolence. At his creation, man was destined to be a labourer. In Paradise Adam was a working man. There was, however, this difference between his condition then and ours now; in Eden labour was without fatigue, pain, or wasting of the strength: now it is accompanied with all these. But still, that which in one respect is a curse, is in another a blessing. The curse does not consist in labour itself, but in what sin has brought in with it. If in Paradise man would not have been happy without employment, when he had no dark and troubled thoughts; no guilty conscience to break in upon his solitude and make his own companionship unwelcome, and his hours tedious; how much less could he be happy

now, with nothing to do but to converse with his own depraved heart and burdened conscience! It is not labour then, but the excess of it, which constitutes the curse: and even the hardest labour would soon to most persons become more tolerable than absolute non-employment. Thus man must work; yes, and so must the Christian. The Bible knows nothing of an unworking believer. There will be employment in heaven. We are not to conceive of the celestial state as one of dreamy repose. We know very well "there remaineth a rest for the people of God:" but with our incorruptible, spiritual, and glorified bodies, activity will be rest, and rest activity. It is beautifully said of that state, "There his servants shall serve him." As if it were their sole employment, honour, and bliss, to serve Him. The flame of love will not consume itself in mere fervour of seraphic devotion, but will diffuse the warmth of life through the glorified soul and body, and sustain in immortal vigour the untiring and unexhausted energies of both.

I here take up two or three passages of holy Scripture. The apostle, in writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of "the work of faith." By this we are to understand, not what faith is, but what it does. It is of itself a mental work, but the apostle evidently intends to describe its effects rather than its nature, and to represent it as a principle, or rather the principle, of Christian activity. We may next refer to what is said by James: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without

thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." In that important practical part of the New Testament, the apostle, as I showed in a former chapter, does not intend to contradict the apostle Paul, where he states that we are justified by faith without works, but to prove that the faith which stands alone in the justification of a sinner, necessarily draws after it the good works which justify the profession of the believer. Here, then, the indispensable necessity of good works as a fruit of faith, and a condition, though not a meritorious one, of salvation, is most emphatically insisted upon. How much is said about this subject in other places, even by Paul, though he so strenuously insisted upon the exclusion of good works from justification! He describes the real Christian as one who is "zealous of good works." Almost immediately afterwards, he says, "Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." And just before this we find the following striking passage, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that" [in order that] "they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." The faithful sayings and things which the apostle orders Titus to affirm, are not what follows, but what went before, that is, our justification by grace through faith. It is not a mere direction to Titus to inculcate upon believers the practice of good works, but a direction that he should ever make, as the most efficient means of maintaining that practice, a full exhibition and earnest enforcement of the great essential articles of evangelical truth: these were to be constantly affirmed by him, in order that believers might be careful to maintain good works. Evangelical doctrines were to

be taught as the seminal principles of evangelical practice. Justification by faith without works was to be exhibited and applied for the very purpose of producing works. What an answer to those who tell us that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness! On the other hand, what a severe rebuke to those who treat these doctrines as mere theological dogmas, or Christian privileges, but not as practical principles! Nothing more strikingly proves and represents the practical nature of the gospel, than this; or more beautifully exhibits the union of Christian theology with Christian morality. Justification and sanctification are not only inseparably joined together, but the former is to be taught for the purpose of producing the latter. I come then to this great and important conclusion, that true faith is inseparable from, and productive of, good works.

It may be well here to describe good works.

1. They must be good in their nature: materially good, good in themselves. By which I mean they must be something which God has commanded. The rule by which to judge what actions are entitled to this epithet, is the Word of God. Religion consists in doing just what God has enjoined and nothing more: all unprescribed services, however imposing in appearance, however mortifying to the flesh, although commanded by men or by ecclesiastical authority, instead of being good works are bad ones. All that mass of ceremony with which Popery has overlaid the simplicity of Christ, is a wicked invasion of the authority of God, and a corruption of his religion, and meets with no other reception from him, than the hypocritical formalism of the Jews did, in reference to which he said, "Who hath required this at your hands?" To command what God has not com-

manded, and thus add to his laws, is a reflection upon his wisdom and goodness, and an usurpation of his rights; for if it be good and right to be done, why did he neglect to enjoin it? If it is bad, who so wicked as he who prescribes it? Is it not setting up another authority than his to enjoin what he has not enjoined? What would be said of any one who should affect to impose any new laws on this kingdom, and to make it the duty of her Majesty's subjects to obey them? Upon this absurd notion of our doing something more than what God has commanded, and than what it is our duty to do, the Popish doctrine of supererogation and indulgences is founded. The merit of this surplus of duty goes to form a treasury, placed at the disposal of the Pope, that he may deal it out in such doles as he thinks fit, for the benefit of the souls in purgatory, to lessen the weight or shorten the duration of their sufferings in that disciplinary state. How horrid an idea! But what a power it gives to that accursed system! Surely true piety may find enough to do in what is commanded, without inventing and doing what is not.

By good works then, you are to understand all the great duties of Christian morals, all that we owe to God according to the prescriptions of the moral law and the Christian dispensation; together with all that we owe to our neighbour according to the second table of the law, and all that we owe to ourselves in the way of self-government of our appetites and propensities. Justice, truth, chastity, mercy, and all the other social and domestic virtues, the excellence of which is acknowledged by all nations; the necessity of which to the well-being of society, has been admitted by moralists of every country and every age; and to the neglect or practice

of which, historians have traced the prosperity or the decline of nations. These are the good works which Christianity enjoins. Her religious rites are few and simple; her ceremonies occupy a very small and secondary place in her system; the main space is devoted to the whatsoever things are true, and honest, and pure, and just, and lovely, and of good report. Her place on earth is not merely the sanctuary of religion, but the scenes of social and domestic life. Her business is not only to regulate the ceremonial of the temple, but the transactions of the exchange. And her object is to make not only the devotee, but the good member of social life. And this is her excellence and her glory.

But while the whole range of moral duties is included within the circle of "good works," and they are all fruits of faith, there is one species of sacred virtue, which in the Scripture, with special emphasis, is designated "good," and that is benevolence. Hence by the injunction, "Do good," the apostle intends, acts of benevolence. This also is his meaning where he says, "For scarcely for a righteous (just) man, will one die: yet peradventure for a good (benevolent) man, some would even dare to die." From this it is evident, that in those days eminent philanthropy was supposed to be the crown of virtue: the man who to justice added mercy, was considered the perfection of humanity: a perfection very rarely exhibited in the heathen world. Here I have occasion again to note and admire the excellence of Christianity, inasmuch as it inculcates not only good works in general, but especially that particular species, which by way of eminence and emphasis, is set forth as the best of them; and clearly shows that a

Christian is to be distinguished above all others by his abounding beneficence.

2. Good works are such as spring from faith in the system of Divine truth: but as this is included in the general subject, I need not enlarge upon it, further than to say, that they cannot precede, but must follow, the exercise of faith. Not only must there be faith in God, but in Christ, not only faith in general, but saving faith; faith not only for sanctification, but for justification, before good works can be performed. I should however hesitate to call the amiable, useful, and lovely virtues which are practised by some unconverted persons, in the full sense of the phrase, bad or wicked works. That they do not constitute holiness, cannot be accepted of God as morally excellent, and can avail nothing to salvation, is quite clear: but they may be characterised as defective, and therefore sinful, rather than wicked, except where they are performed under the impulse of pride or vanity. Till a man really believes in Christ, there certainly can be no works that are spiritually good. The Article of the Church of England, "On Works done before Justification," is very explicit on this subject. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say), deserve grace of congruity; yea, rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin."

3. Good works must proceed from a renewed heart. The tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good. The fruits of the Spirit can be yielded only by a

heart sanctified by the Spirit. There is a material difference, as I have considered in a former chapter, between the morality of a worldly man, and that of a Christian; not in outward appearance, but in inward principle; not in matter, but in rule, motive, end: not in benefit to the object, but in reward to the doer.

4. Good works are such as are directed to the glory of God. The end of an action is its moral characteristic. It is not only what I do that constitutes moral excellence, bnt for what end and purpose I do it. A man may be exceedingly kind to a fellow-creature, and really promote his happiness, and yet he may do it not out of any regard to the welfare of the individual whom he thus favours, but merely to promote some personal end of his own. Under the guise of bounty he may conceal mere selfishness. So whatever works they be a man may perform towards God, yet they are not good in the scriptural sense of the word, unless they are performed with an intelligent and voluntary regard to that injunction, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Leave out God as the end of our actions, and everything we do falls short of religion, however excellent it may appear in itself, and however beneficial it may be to others.

You can now easily perceive, that in all this, faith bears a most distinguished part, faith recognises the Word of God as the rule of conduct, which teaches us what good works are required of us, it brings us into a state of acceptance with God, on the ground of which our works are accepted, it unites us to Christ, and derives from him, as the branch from the tree, the spiritual life which enables us to bring forth good fruit,

and it acknowledges God to be the end of all our actions.

There is one beautiful exhibition of the operation of faith, which deserves separate and special notice, as presenting us with a very complete and very attractive representation: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." In this one passage, in these few plain words, the whole Christian scheme comes out upon us in all its simplicity, sublimity, and beauty. We learn it both in its negative form, as setting light by ceremony; and in its positive nature, as consisting of spiritual exercises and moral duties. Here is an epitome of gospel truth and gospel practice, of Christian duty and Christian privilege. Who, in comparing with this the gorgeous ritual of Popery, and its humble imitation in Puseyism, does not perceive that the system of the New Testament and that of those corruptions of it, are two entirely different things? How opposed to the spirit of this simple and beautiful language is the spirit of that formalism which has become so fashionable in these modern times! What do we find in this passage, or any other in the New Testament, of that zeal for architecture and sculpture, for surplices and robes, for postures and genuflexions, for sacraments and ceremonies, for fasts and festivals, for apostolical succession and episcopal ordination, for priestly mediation and prelatical authority, for absolution and confession, for the position of a font and the furniture and shape of an altar, which enter so largely into the religion of so many in these days? How melancholy does it make an intelligent and ardent lover of his New Testament, to see

Christianity, which came into our world to raise human nature not only to manhood, but to real and noble sainthood, degraded to the task of substituting endless frivolities for substantial excellences; to see her compelled to mimic the ceremonies of Paganism, and to go back to the obsolete system of Judaism, in order to restore to us a religion of the senses instead of the intellect; and thus, while the world around is growing in strength and stature, exhibiting the church sinking into a second childhood, and becoming a pupil of the Pope instead of Christ. But no; Christianity does not, will not sanction this; it may be done in her name, but it is without her authority, and against her precepts and her genius. She that in the person of her Divine Lord was born in a stable, brought up at Nazareth, delivered her lessons on mountains and in streets, chose her apostles from the boats of fishermen, and summed up all she is and all she taught in these few simple words, faith that worketh by love: she, I say, turns with the mingled smile of contempt and frown of indignation, from the trumperies which the priests of more churches than one, are palming upon this generation for pure and undefiled religion. Because God in his wisdom gave to his church in its infancy a Bible of hieroglyphics and a religion of symbols, these men would prevent the church from coming to the unity of the faith, and a knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Here, then, is our activity, not a moving round and round in the enchanted circle of the church, instead of the Bible, of ceremonial observances, rather than moral duties; ever in motion, but never in progress, no; but instead of this cherishing the faith that worketh by love. I do not

mean to contend that this excludes the observance of public worship, baptism, and the Lord's supper; but I do mean to say that, by implication, it places these below the exercise of faith and love, as far inferior to them.

I have now to state, in following out the consideration of this passage,

1. What the love is that faith produces. And it of course begins with God. He is the supreme object of holy love. Religion is love, and love begins with God. The very substance of true conversion is a change from supreme selfishness to this divine affection. Every unconverted sinner is supremely selfish; that is, he loves himself, and all that pertains to himself, instead of God. He goes further in depravity than this; for he not only does not love God, but he dislikes him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." He views God as his enemy. Under a consciousness that he has sinned against God, he is afraid of him, and retires from him; and would for ever avoid him if he could. He likes nothing that appertains to him, neither his people, nor his word, nor his service. Though a sense of his dependence may sometimes lead him to ask his pity and help; yet in other circumstances and moods, he is repelled from God, especially when viewed in his moral attributes of holiness and justice. Conscious guilt, therefore, works by enmity. In this state, the mind, heart, and conscience of the sinner remain, and must ever remain, till faith comes into his heart. There he is, as long as he is ignorant of the gospel, and destitute of faith in Christ, a sullen wanderer from God, feeling, if not saying, "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But the hour of mercy arrives. His attention

is arrested either by a sermon, or by some other means, and fixed upon the glad tidings of salvation. He is convinced by the Spirit, not only of sin, but of righteousness. The message of Divine love in Christ's death as an atonement, not only reaches his ear, but enters, like heavenly music, into his very soul. Yes, it is a fact, a great and glorious fact, that God has loved him; Christ died for him; salvation is offered him. He believes it, really believes it: not only hears of it, talks of it, desires it, but believes it. He commits his soul, by an act of confidence, into the hands of Christ. There is his faith, simple, firm, hopeful. That faith has changed every thing. It has wrought an entire revolution of thought, feeling, and willing. For see what he has believed: he believes God has good-will towards him; wills not his death; delights in his salvation, and has been all along during the days of his stubborn unregeneracy waiting to be gracious to him. He hears his voice saying, "Come unto me. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Can a man really believe that, and not be changed? Impossible. His sullenness gives way, his heart melts, all his views of God are changed, and so are all his feelings towards him. "He loves me, he loves me," he exclaims with astonishment. "Wicked as I have been: wretch that I have proved myself towards him: he has sent his Son to die for me, and has pursued me by his Spirit in my wanderings, and has at length brought me to himself. Oh, my father, my father, thou hast conquered me by love: and now what can I do but love thee in return. Yes, thou that wast once the object of my hatred, art the object of my supreme affection: thou that wast once the point of repulsion to my poor guilty soul, hast sovereign attraction for it. What now shall

I render thee for thine infinite mercies towards me? 'Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds.'" What a change! Now, God appears infinitely lovely. Every attribute of his nature is a separate glory, and all combined are transcendent beauty. Even justice and holiness, which once so terrified him and drove him away like the flaming sword of the cherubim repulsing Adam from Eden, are all loveliness, as well as mercy. Wonder, gratitude, love, joy, all by turns, take possession of his soul. All that is God's, now delights him; his character, his Word, his people, his day, his service. And especially is Jesus Christ an object of his affection. A cold and careless thought, and this only occasional, was all he once gave to Christ. He saw in him no beauty that he should desire him: no worth that he should choose him. His bosom never glowed with a beam of genial warmth. The cross itself was a sound that awakened no emotion. Neither Gethsemane nor Calvary had any charms for him. He considered the joys of believers as enthusiasm, and their attestations to the preciousness of him whom unseen they loved, as little better than cant. But now what a change has come over him in reference to the Saviour of his soul! His name, is music; his person, the object of admiration, love, and delight; his work, the cause of unbounded gratitude; his example, the perfection of beauty; and his commandments, a law most pleasant to be obeyed. He is indeed "precious," the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. What has produced this change of sentiment, feeling, and choice? What is it that has made the subject of this change thus voluntarily take up the yoke he once spurned, and that impels him to works of devotedness, obedience, and self-

denial? Faith. The man has now really believed the testimony concerning Christ, which he never did before. He had read it with a careless eye, and heard it with a half-closed ear, but without a single fixed thought, or one conviction of truth; but now he understands and believes it, and all is changed. O, what a revolution was wrought in that hour when faith opened the door of the heart, and let in the testimony to Christ contained in the gospel!

And you can understand this easily enough by analogy. There is a fellow-creature whom your misconduct has made your enemy. He is powerful, and can avenge the insult you have offered him and the injury you have inflicted on him. You dread him, and in proportion is your hatred of him. You shun him, for you are afraid of him, since you imagine he can entertain no purpose towards you but of revenge. But you mistake his character and his intentions. He is generous and forgiving, and out of mere kindness sends you a message that he is willing to pardon you and receive you to his friendship. At first you cannot credit the assertion, and retain your dread and hate. The message of mercy is repeated and confirmed by evidence which you cannot resist: your stubborn unbelief, and sullen ill-will relax, and you begin to think more favourably of his disposition towards you, and feel a change coming over your disposition towards him. At length you are brought into full confidence in his unmerited and surprising favour. "Yes," you exclaim, "it is really true, he that could have ruined me, pities me and pardons me, I cannot doubt it, I believe it. I am vanquished by love. O my benefactor, my benefactor, I thank thee, I love thee, and from this hour I will serve thee." What is

this! Faith working by love: and a resemblance of the operation of the grace of faith in the sinner's heart towards Jesus Christ, and his Divine Father. "We love him because he first loved us:" and the cause of that entire change in all our views of and feelings towards God, which constitutes conversion, is thus stated by the apostle: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Herein is verified his own beautiful language to the Jews, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." O wondrous power of love! Mighty conqueror of man's stony heart! How soft, yet how invincible, thine influence! But it must be believed to be victorious. Doubts and fears of its reality, or its sincerity, deprive it of its force. Even the infinite, omnipotent love of the eternal God can have no power over the soul that is steeled in unbelief. It is faith that unlocks, unbolts, unbars the gate of "Mansoul," for love, which is besieging it in vain till then, to enter and take full possession. And in every after-stage of the Christian life, it is this same faith keeping up the same lively sense of God's love to us, that keeps up our love to God.

Love being thus brought into the soul and also kept there by faith, remains not idle or inert, but sets instantly to work. Love is the most active thing in all the world. See it in the conduct of a tender and faithful wife towards the husband of her heart. See it in the mother's sleepless activities towards the babe at her bosom. See it in the devoted servant towards the master of his choice. What will not love do in the way of constant, self-denying, untiring activity, or bear

in the way of privation and suffering! How hardly, yet how willingly, and cheerfully, and pleasantly, it works for its object! Work is pleasure, labour is delight. Love seems to resemble the cherubic figure, having the courage of the lion, the patience of the ox, the wing of the eagle, all directed by the intelligence and will of the man.

All this is true of love to God, which is the strongest, the tenderest, and most invincible love. It is the sublime of love, the loftiest and noblest exercise of this master-passion of the human soul. And it works in the way of obedience, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." It is not a mere emotion, but a principle; not only a matter of the sensibility, but of the will; not the mere genial warmth of a soul of softer mould, but the steady, and in some cases stern resolve of a mind that lays hold of the strength of God, and says, "I will serve thee even unto death." The works it performs are all the things that God has enjoined. It takes up the moral law, and says, "All this will I do: my delight is to do thy will, O God." It allows of no selections or exceptions, but says, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." It makes no stipulations, but surrenders itself to any condition or circumstance. It covenants for no limitations of time or place, but is eager to serve every where, on earth and in heaven, and always, unto death and through eternity. There is one thing, and one only, in all the universe it hates, and that it does hate with an intense and unquenchable animosity in all its forms and degrees, and that is sin: and there is one thing it covets, seeks, and prays for, with all its heart, and soul, and strength,

and that is holiness. Such is love, such the working of faith by love.

But still this is only one, though it must be admitted the loftiest, aspect of love. God is the first and supreme, but not the only object of Christian affection. There is a second as well as a first table of the law, which demands love to our neighbour, even as the first demands it for God. And even to this second table of the law the gospel adds a supplement, and demands a holy regard for our Christian brother: both of which are conjoined by the apostle where he says, "add to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity."

How frequently, how variously, and how earnestly are we enjoined both by our Lord, and by that disciple whom Jesus loved, and who by leaning on his bosom seemed to have caught most of his spirit, to love our brethren in Christ. Love to them is the law of his kingdom, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another." It is the badge of discipleship, "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." It is the evidence of conversion, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is the grand inference from the cross, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." It is the natural yearning of the renewed heart, the instinctive prompting of the new nature, the reaching forth of the arm, too feeble and too short to clasp the neck of the Divine Father, to entwine around his image in his children.

And what is the spring of this affection? Why faith. See how these two are united: "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus,

and toward all saints." As if it were impossible to have faith in Christ without love towards the saints. And so it is utterly and absolutely impossible; and the more faith we have in Christ, the more love we shall have towards the saints. Believing the love that Christ has towards them, viewing them as the purchase of his blood and the objects of his tenderest affection, our hearts will, by a kind of necessity, be knit to them. Every fresh view of the cross will endear them to our hearts. If each limb of our body were the seat of separate consciousness, how strong a regard, and tender a sympathy, might it be supposed would subsist between the members, and how all would love each, and each all, on account of the one animating and presiding soul which would be their centre of unity. Now in the mystical body of Christ, this is the case; each has a separate individual soul, while all are united to the same Divine Head, and each loves all, and all love each, on account of the Divine Head to which all are united by faith; and as each presses nearer to the great centre, they all press closer to one another.

And why is it that the members of this body do not love one another more, and allow such comparatively trifling matters to alienate them from each other? How is it that sectarianism gains such an ascendancy over the members of the redeemed family, and introduces so much coldness, distance, and even hostility? Just because the faith of the church is so weak. Did we more powerfully realise the fact that Christ died for us all, that he loves us all, that he claims us all, that he delights in us all; would not the effect of this persuasion be to check the progress of alienation and draw us closer to each other? Are there not happy, holy moments,

rich in blessing, when gazing upon the cross, and melting into love, we feel as if we really did love without one alien feeling, all for whom Christ died? Before that strong and steady belief, which comprehended the whole plan, purpose, and objects of redeeming mercy, every enmity was subdued, and all indifference was warmed into affection, and we felt on rising from our knees as if there was not a Christian in existence of any sect, creed, or party, around whose neck we could not throw the arms of love, and say, "My brother, my brother." It is only from a stronger faith that a stronger love can grow up in the Christian Church, and all attempts to bring about union that do not begin here will most assuredly fail. The first movement, therefore, in this direction, must be towards the cross.

But then to brotherly kindness must be added charity. By the latter, as distinguished from the former, you are to understand good-will to all mankind, irrespective of character. The one is brother-love: the other is neighbour-love. The one is obedience to the law, the other is the fruit of the gospel: but both are the fruits of a working faith. It is of this love the apostle speaks in that beautiful chapter, the thirteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The subject of that wonderful and glorious portion of Scripture is the charity we are to add to our brotherly-kindness. That one chapter is worth incalculably more than all the volumes the pen of moral philosophy ever wrote. What a happy world, how nearly resembling heaven, we should live in, if that were the rule of conduct every where, always, in all things, and to all men! Earth would reflect the face of heaven, even as in the mirror

of a peaceful lake, the quiet, noiseless, blue sky is to be seen. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things." What a seraph! But whence is she to come? From heaven. And what is to bring her? Faith. No, there is nothing like this on earth. She has lain in the bosom of God; and next to his Son, is his darling offspring, which, at the prayer of faith, he sends down to bless the world. He that dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him. Charity, or good-will to all, a desire of the happiness of all, and a will to promote it, is the very culminating point, the crown and glory of love, so far as creatures are its object. Even the whole church is not enough, nor the whole world, but the great universe of God. All being, created or uncreated, is the object of the true Christian's regard; and happiness, the happiness of the whole, his desire. His heart works outward in its wishes to the remotest circumference. And what is the impelling power? Faith. He believes in God, and God's love. He believes in Christ, and Christ's love. He believes that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He believes that Christ shed his blood as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He would love all whom God and Christ love, and with the same kind of love. He would keep pace in the workings of his benevolence with the workings of that which is Divine. His universal bene-

volence is a very different thing from that which infidelity prates about, and some few years ago endeavoured to raise on the ruins of individual tenderness and particular affections. It takes its pattern from God's, which recognises the social ties and their charities, and leaves in all their strength, order, and working, the relations of man to man; but at the same time, moves onward from particulars to generals.

He that has most faith, will have most charity. The predominance of this all-working, ever-working, mighty-working principle, would convert the whole church into a company of philanthropists. When the full power of the cross is felt in the hearts of believers; when all the constraining influence of the love of Christ is experienced; when the whole church is fully possessed with the spirit of faith, and rooted and grounded in love, the scene so beautifully exhibited in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, will in some form and extent be repeated, and no man call aught that he hath his own, with this only difference, that the love of believers will not stay in the church, but go out into all the world. The Howards, the Clarksons, the Wilberforces, the Buxtons, the Allens, the Mrs. Frys, whose zeal and humanity were produced by faith, will no longer be the rare and beautiful exceptions to the ordinary believers, but of the ordinary race of Christians. And the Schwartzs, the Brainerds, the Careys, the Morrisons, the Martyns, the Vanderkemps, the Williamses, the Moffats, will be only of the average standard of professing Christians. The full power of faith would make the whole church willing to be philanthropists, missionaries, reformers, or martyrs, as God should require.

Then, when faith has acquired this power, will the church exhibit its characteristic loveliness as the benefactress of the world. To do good is its calling. It is God's representative in our world; and as bearing his image, it should, to teach the world what he is, bear upon its lofty front this inscription, "The church is love, for God is love." All professing Christians should feel that benevolence is their appropriate duty, their very work of works. The love of the world should be seen in them to be destroyed. An eager ambition after wealth, for the sake of the luxuries and splendours which it enables its possessor to command, should be transmuted in them into a desire to be rich in order to be liberal. The glory of affluence should, in their estimation, lie in the opportunity it affords to do good. Instead of an anxiety to obtain noble mansions, elegant furniture, handsome equipages, and expensive entertainments, and all the other luxuries of taste and fashion, the followers of Him, who though rich yet for their sakes became poor, and of his equally poor apostles, should be distinguished by an expressive simplicity of habit and manners. In this way, among others, their faith should gain the victory over the world; in this way, should work by love; in this way, should labour for the good of mankind. They should contract their luxuries that they may enlarge their charities. Economy should provide the resources of their liberality; and they should spend too much upon others to have much to spend upon themselves, instead of reversing this as many do, who spend too much upon themselves, to have much to spend upon others. And a stronger faith must and would inevitably lead to this. For who could embrace, by a vigorous belief, the self-denying

doctrines, precepts, and example of Christ, and not realize their obligations and perform their duties?

This, then, is the "labour of love," springing from the work of faith.

But it is time to draw this chapter to a close, and what better close can be given to it, than again most emphatically to remind the reader that religion is work, hard work, a great work. It is by multitudes fearfully mistaken. All along the page of inspired truth, the word is continually occurring, work, work, work. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "Be zealous of good works." "Be careful to maintain good works." "I know thy works." These are but specimens of Scripture language on this subject. I am afraid that many are deceiving themselves with a religion which is neither work nor pleasure, but only a name. They have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith without works, into an excuse for the neglect of works altogether. They seem to imagine that faith is an opiate instead of a stimulant, Calvary a place of slumber instead of labour, and the cross a goal instead of a starting-point. When we are converted, instead of considering our labour done, we should remember it is but just begun. When the Israelites were possessed of Canaan, they had the Amorites and other enemies to conquer and drive out before them. Every man has corrupt and sinful habits that have overspread, and as it were engarrisoned, themselves in his heart, and which can be reduced only by a tedious and laborious siege. Or to change the metaphor, habits are weeds, that by an accursed fertility are ever springing

up in the soil of our moral nature, and sprout afresh as often as they are cut down. Let a man make experiment in any one sin of his heart, whether it be pride, or malice, or covetousness; does it fall before his attempts at mortification suddenly and easily? Does the first foil or blow make him victorious, and enable him to set his foot upon the neck of his conquered enemy? No, are there not many vicissitudes in the combat? Is he not sometimes victor, and at other times vanquished? And perhaps after all his conflicts with it, many a Christian goes out of the world only with this half-trophy, enough indeed just to save him, that he was not overcome. Alas, of how few can it be said, "They are more than conquerors."

Then let it be remembered also, that the work of mortification is but half the work a Christian has to do; for there is also vivification, which is the other half. Religion ends not in negatives. No man ploughs his field, or tills his garden, merely to kill weeds, but to sow corn or to plant flowers. A room may be clean, and yet empty: and it is not enough for our hearts to be swept unless they be also furnished. A man may not be a tiger or a demon in his disposition, and yet he may not be a saint or an angel. Now our religion requires not only putting away our pride, our malice, our covetousness, and our injustice, but also cultivating humility, liberality, love, and generosity. Religion is of an aspiring nature, requiring us to proceed from grace to grace; to faith adding virtue, to virtue adding patience, to patience temperance, to temperance godliness, to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity; thus ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the

lofty staircase reaches to heaven, and lands the soul so qualified in the mansions of glory.* And who knows not that the ascent by such a steep flight of steps is a work of labour and difficulty?

Nothing but faith can enable the soul to accomplish this; and this, as I have shown in the chapter on sanctification, it does by obtaining through Christ that aid of the Holy Spirit, by which alone our good works can be accomplished.

I conclude this chapter with the words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "From these premises we may see but too evidently, that though a great part of mankind pretend to be saved by faith, yet they know not what it is, or wilfully mistake it, and place their hopes upon sand or the more unstable waters. Believing is the least thing in a justifying faith. Alas, the niceties of a spruce understanding, and the curious nothings of a useless speculation, and all the opinions of men that make the divisions of heart, and do nothing else, cannot bring us one drop of comfort in the day of tribulation; and therefore are no parts of the strength of faith. Nay, when a man begins truly to fear God, and is in the agonies of mortification, all these new nothings and curiosities will be neglected, as baubles are by children when they are deadly sick. But that only is faith, which makes us to love God, to do his will, to suffer his impositions, to trust his promises, to see through a cloud, to overcome the world, to resist the devil, to stand in the day of trial, and to be comforted in all our sorrows. This is that precious faith, so mainly necessary to be insisted on, that by it we may be the sons of the free woman; that the true Isaac may be in us, which is

* South's Sermons.

Christ according to the Spirit; the wisdom and power of God; a Divine vigour and life, whereby they are enabled with joy and cheerfulness to walk in the way of God. By this you may try your faith, if you please, and make an end of the question, 'Do you believe in the Lord Jesus, yea or no? God forbid else! but if your faith be good, it will abide the trial. There are but three things that make the integrity of Christian faith, believing the words of God; confidence in his goodness; and keeping his commandments.'"

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

HUDSON AND SON, PRINTERS, BULL STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

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